The true Effigies of
Mr. Nathanael Vincent,
Minister of the Gospel:

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THE Conversion OF THE SOUL: OR, A DISCOURSE EXPLAINING The Nature of that CONVERSION which is Sincere; and Directing and Perswading all to cease their loving Sin and Death, and to Turn to God and Live.

By *NATHANAEL VINCENT*, M. A. Minister of the Gospel.

Jer. 3. 12. *Go and proclaim these words towards the North, and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.*

Dixit Deus, Fiat Lux, & facta est Lux: Dicit; Convertimini filii hominum, & Conversi sunt: Ita plane Conversio animarum, opus divinæ vocis est, non humanæ, *Bernard* de Conversione, ad *Clericos*, cap. 1. pag. mihi 843.

Κτᾶσθε βιβλία φάρμακα τῆς ψυχῆς· τοῦτο πάντων ἄπιστον πρὸς κακῶν τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι τὰς γραφάς, Chrysost. in Epist. ad Colos.

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LICENSED,

March 5. 168$\frac{7}{8}$.

TO

The Right Honourable

Sir *JOHN SHORTER*,

Lord MAIOR

OF THE

CITY of *LONDON*.

My Lord!

THis is a time in which by the *Gracious Providence of God*, and by the *Unexpected*, and therefore more *Obliging Favour of his Majesty*, I enjoy a Liberty more publickly to Preach the Goſpel. I now alſo take the Boldneſs, to Preſent ſome Ser-

mons which lately ſounded from my Mouth in the Pulpit, unto your Lordſhip, the Supream Magiſtrate in the City. I am glad that the Goſpel of Peace may now be Preached without Diſturbance; and that thoſe hands that without reaſon were once ſo Violent, are now tied up, ſo that they cannot inflict thoſe ſevere Penalties, which never were indeed deſerved.

I cordially Deſire and Pray for the Proſperity and Welfare of *London*: And were it but a City *all of Converts*, it would be the Joy and Glory of the whole Earth, and reſemble that *Heavenly Jeruſalem* above, where there is neither Sin nor Trouble.

Converſion is not to be Preſſed only upon *Heathens* and *Infidels*: How many that are called *Chriſtians* go beyond *Them* in Wickedneſs! and conſequently need it as much, nay, more than they? The *Jews* of old did make their *Boaſt of God* and of his *Temple*,

yet

yet the Prophets call them to Turn; and tell them, that Death was no other way avoidable.

The Way to Heaven and a Glorious Immortality is but One, and truly 'tis a very narrow one: You that are high, as well as they that are low, muſt tread in the ſame Path of Holineſs, or elſe your hopes of Everlaſting Life will end in a dreadful Diſappointment.

My Lord!

'Tis my Prayer for you, that you may be preſerved from Temptations; that you may exerciſe your Authority, ſo as to Reform the City over which you Preſide, from that Debauchery and Prophaneneſs which has ſo much Impoveriſhed it; which is its Shame and Diſgrace, and which cries ſo loud to Heaven for Vengeance to be inflicted upon it.

A great Truſt is repoſed in you: I wiſh you Wiſdom and holy Reſo-

lution from above, to Improve the Price put into your Hands: You must be called to an Account at last, *What singular thing you have done for God, and for his Truth and Interest, in this Year of your Maioralty*: The greater Enemy you shew your self to all sorts of Vices, and the more Exemplary you are in fearing God and keeping his Commandments, the greater Blessing you will be to *London*, and the more truly you will Consult your own Honour and Blessedness. I am,

Your LORDSHIPS

Most Humble Servant,

Nathanael Vincent.

THE
Epiſtle to the READER.

Reader!

IF this Book by the Providence of God ſhall come into thy Hand, and thou wilt beſtow the Pains to peruſe it; I would have thee read it, as he who has the Benefit of the Clergy, reads that Verſe with Care, the reading of which well, does ſave his Life. Agitur de Magnis: *Things of the greateſt Importance are here treated of. The ſubject matter of this Diſcourſe is its Commendation: Mans Converſion to God is explain'd and preſs'd. The Authour can truly ſay, He earneſtly deſired the Converſion of thoſe that heard theſe Sermons; and Hope that ſome may be turned to God by the reading of them, is the reaſon of their being Printed.*

Melchior Adamus *reports of that famous German Preacher* Bucholſtzer, *That he troubled not the Church with* Polemical Divinity; *his great Deſign was to draw Men to a Saviour, to turn them to the living God; that their Hearts and Lives might be pure, and their End peace, and that after Death they might enter into Everlaſting Reſt. The* Pruritus Diſputandi, *the Itch of Diſputing has taken away the Beauty of the* Churches Face *and* Hands: *Certainly it would be more for the Churches Health and Strength and Glory, if the great Truths of the Goſpel were more inſiſted on;* namely, Faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, *and* Converſion, *which is the ſame with* Repentance towards God.

How many ſtrange Doctrines are vented! how many quaint

quaint Notions, that pleaſe the Fancy rather than Edifie the Soul, will be found Wood, Hay, Stubble *at laſt; and be Loſt and Conſumed, as not being able to endure the* Fire, *a ſtrict* Tryal! *Diſcourſes, which out of the Scriptures of Truth have plainly declared the* Myſtery of God, and of the Father, and of Chriſt; *the Myſtery of* Converſion and of Godlineſs, *will be found to be* Gold, Silver, Precious Stones, *and will turn to beſt Account to thoſe who have built on the right Foundation.*

Reader! *Art thou* Unconverted? *does thy ſtupidneſs under the Guilt of Sin, and thy contentedneſs to be ſtill its Slave prove thee to be ſo? I, pray thee, have not leſs* Faith *than the very* Devils, *for* they Believe and tremble: *Thy ſtate is truly doleful, but not deſperate; but quickly it may be ſo, if thou ſtill refuſeſt to be a Convert: The* Door of Hope *may ſoon be ſhut, that now ſtands open; Death may ſuddenly ſeize thee, and ſend thee with all thy Sins unto the Bar of God, who judges righteouſly.* Awake, O Conſcience, *before it be too late!* O Heart, harden *thy ſelf no longer!* Wrath in the day of Wrath *will be very terrible.*

But if thou art indeed a Convert, *and thy ſubmiſſion to God, and chuſing him above* all things, *is the evidence of it; this Book brings thee happy Tidings, and as true as happy. Converting Grace is the greateſt benefit beſtowed on Earth, and when that Grace has finiſhed its work, Eternal Glory will aſſuredly follow. That all the Hearers of theſe Sermons may be ſuch hearers, as that* their Souls may live; *that all the Readers of them may read with advantage to their Souls, with an advantage that may laſt unto Eternity; is, and ſhall be the Prayer of*

Nathanael Vincent.

PSAL. XIX. 7. former part.

The Law of the Lord is perfect, Converting the Soul.

THE Works of God, though in himself invisible, shew forth the Workers Wisdom, Power and Goodness[a]: The *Heavens* Preach to *Men on Earth*, and plainly *Declare their Creators Glory*; they utter a *Voice* which all of all Languages may understand; here are such *lines*, in which every Eye may read the eternal *Power and Godhead* of *Him*, of *whom*, *and through whom*, *and to whom are all things*, and who is to be glorified for evermore. Among the other Works of God, the Psalmist takes special notice of the *Sun in the Firmament*, whose light and influence is so great and beneficial; and then

[a] *Opera Dei, si pius Considerator advertat, perhibent testimonium Creatori; quid autem horum est quod non sit mirabile, si unumquodque ratione metiamur!* Augustin. *Enarrat.* in Psal. 118.

then makes a tranſition to the Law and Word of God, whoſe *Light* in a ſenſe *obſcures* that *glorious Luminary*; giving ſuch a clear manifeſtation, and affecting knowledge to Man, concerning his Maker, as turns his Heart to him, though naturally blind and fooliſh, alienated and eſtranged from Him. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, Converting the Soul.*

This weighty Argument of *Converſion*, I begin to inſiſt on this day. *Converſion to God* is the *Epitome of Religion*, it is the *Summe of Law and Goſpel*; in a *few Syllables*, it is fallen Man's recovery and riſing again, and the new making of that which Sin had marr'd and ſpoyled; it is the ſhutting of Hell, and is exceedingly oppoſed by the evil Angels that are there; it is the opening of the gate of Heaven: There is *no Flaming Sword* to keep the true Convert *from the Tree of Life*; he ſhall have entrance into the Paradiſe of God, and be crown'd with Righteouſneſs and Immortality.

But is not the *Tongue of an Angel* fitter to be employed in calling to Converſion, than that of a mortal Man? Is there not need of the loudeſt Thunder, or ſuch an amazing ſound as was heard when the *Law* was delivered on *Mount Sinai* of old? How

How unlikely, alas! how unlikely are humane endeavours to be ſucceſsful! ſince where Converſion is, the *Power of Satan* muſt be vanquiſht; the *Dominion of Sin*, unto which the whole World almoſt is ſubject, muſt be *thrown down*; the *Deaf* muſt be made to *hear*, the *Blind* muſt be made to *ſee*, and the *Dead* muſt be raiſed to the *higheſt Life* in this World, and that is *Life Spiritual*; and *Nature it ſelf* muſt be changed, and of *Old* become *New*. Lord! what is Man, that he ſhould be employed in ſuch a work as this! the *earthen Veſſel* is *weak*, or rather *nothing*; the *Treaſure* is the *Word of God*, and the *Excellency* of its *Power* is of the *Lord himſelf*. *The Law of Lord is perfect, Converting the Soul.*

In the Text there are four things obſervable.

1. The Word of God is called the *Law of the Lord*. The Law comprehends not only the Preceptive part, but alſo the whole Doctrine revealed in the Holy Scriptures. The very Goſpel it ſelf is ſtyled the *Law of Faith*: Well may the Word of God be called a *Law*, ſince its Author is the *great Law-giver, who has Power to ſave and to deſtroy*; and conſidering the deep Obligation it layes Man under.

der. A *principal part* of the Word, are the *Commands* of it; the *Promiſes* and *Threatnings* are *Appendices* to the *Precepts*; and the *Examples*, in which both Promiſes and Threatnings are in ſome meaſure fulfilled, may ſtrongly excite unto Obedience.

2. Here is an excellent Property of this Word of God, 'tis *Perfect*; though ſome moſt impiouſly make bold with it, and eke it out with their own *Traditions*, which they make to be of equal Authority with it; yet the Word of God is perfect, ſufficient as *a Means* to attain the *End* whereunto 'tis deſigned, turning Sinners to God, and making them wiſe unto Salvation. He does moſt truly conſult his own Eternal Peace and Safety, and is indeed the wiſeſt Man, who refuſes φρονεῖν ὑπὲρ ὃ γέγραπται, to *be wiſe above what is written.*

3. Here is a notable Effect of the Word of God, and that is *Converſion*: The Hebrew has it מְשִׁיבַת from שׁוּב, and ſignifies *redire faciens*, making to return; ſome Interpreters referr this to the *reſtoring and comforting Power* of the Word of God; which brings as it were, the Man to life again, who was ready to dye away, and to ſink under the burthen of Sin and Miſery: But this *Conſolation ſuppoſes* Converſion

ſion and Repentance; and it ſeems unlikely, that the Pſalmiſt enumerating the more remarkable effects of the Word of God, ſhould omit this of Converſion, which is one of the chiefeſt among them all.

4. The *Sincerity of Converſion* is ſignified, when the *Soul* is ſaid to be Converted. The Soul is ſometimes taken for the *Perſon*, for the whole Man: The whole Man is by Sin corrupted and depraved, and ſtrongly inclined to depart from God; there is need that the whole ſhould be renewed and reduced. Sometimes the Soul is taken for the *ſpiritual and immortal part of Man*; and when *this* is enlightned and inclined, and turned to God, then the *very Heart* which he ſo often calls for, is given him, and the Change that is wrought, is inward, real, ſaving.

I raiſe *four Doctrines* from the Text.

Firſt, *Converſion to God is of abſolute neceſſity, and the great thing he requires of Man.*

Secondly, *Converſion to God is then ſincere, when the Soul is Converted to him.*

Thirdly, *The Word of God is the great Means of Converſion.*

Fourthly, *In the Word of God, which is the Means of Converſion, there is a Perfection and Sufficiency.*

Doct.

Doct. I. I begin with the firſt of theſe. *Converſion to God is of abſolute neceſſity, and the great thing he requires of Man:* 'Tis ſpoken of in the Text, as that which is Man's Duty, Man's Benefit, and that which is inexpreſſibly for Mans Intereſt. *Converting* the Soul, is really *Saving* it, and without Converſion there can be no Salvation: He that turns from his evil wayes ſhall live; he that is reſolved againſt turning, is in effect reſolved to ruine himſelf; Death he *wills*, Death he *chuſes*, and 'tis a ſtrange choice that the Will makes, *Ezek.* 33. 11. *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked ſhould turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil wayes, for why will you dye, O houſe of Iſrael.*

In the handling of this Doctrine, I ſhall

Firſt, *Speak of the preparative Antecedents of Converſion.*

Secondly, *Explain the Nature of Converſion.*

Thirdly, Tell you *what are the Properties of Converſion.*

Fourthly, Demonſtrate *the neceſſity of Converſion, and the reaſon why God does ſo much require it.*

Fifthly, *Anſwer the Arguments which the carnal minds of Men object againſt Converſion.*

Sixthly

the body of Sin may be more and more deſtroyed.

4. In Converſion there is a *turning from the power of Satan.* Unconverted ones *are of their Father the Devil, and the luſts of their Father they will do*; but Converts are no longer at his beck, they are *not led Captive by him at his will*, but are recovered out of his Snare. Satans great Work and Deſign, is to tempt the Children of men to ſin; he is unalterably confirmed and fixed in wickedneſs himſelf, and with might and main he ſtrives to propagate wickedneſs in the World: He is ſtyled πειραζων, and πονηρος, the *Tempter*, and the *evil One*; he is ever ſoliciting and perſwading men to what is evil, and truly he prevails, and works his will and their woe in the Children of Diſobedience; but Converts reſiſt him by the Word and Prayer, and uſing both in Faith, they *put on the whole armour of God, and ſtand againſt the wiles of the Devil*, Eph. 6. 11.

5. In Converſion there is *an alteration of corrupt Nature it ſelf, and its corrupt and vitious Inclination*: This the Apoſtle calls *puting off the old Man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful luſts*, Eph. 4. 22. The old byaſs that ſo ſtrongly inclined the Heart towards Sin, the World, and Hell,

is taken away; habits of ſin are left, cuſtom in evil ceaſes, and Nature is changed; the heart by a work of new Creation is made after the Heart of God, and that which before Converſion was the *worſt part* of Man, *being deceitful above all things and deſperately wicked*, now becomes the *beſt* part of all, and is ſtill deſiring that it ſelf and the whole Man were more compleatly cleanſed from Sin, and ſanctified. I have told you what Converſion is with reference to Sin.

Secondly, Converſion may be conſidered with reference to *this preſent World*: Whenever Converſion is true, as there is a loathing and leaving of Sin, ſo there is a *weaning* from this preſent World. In the Word of God we have the trueſt Map of this World; it is ſet forth as a far Countrey, far from Heaven, bordering upon Hell, and Satan is the Deity that generally here is ſerved, who is therefore called *the God of this World*, 2 Cor. 4. 4. It is full of danger and ſnares, the grand Idol that provokes the Lord to jealouſie; 'tis that which ſtands in competition with Chriſt, and by moſt Hearts is preferr'd before him; 'tis the Devils moſt taking bait, wherewith he beguiles and ruins immortal Souls.

Chriſt

Christ both *Prayed* and *Dyed*, that his followers might be delivered from it: He Prayed, *Joh.* 17. 15. *I Pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the World, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.* He Died to this end also, *Gal.* 1. 4. *Who gave himself for our Sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil World, according to the will of God and our Father*: Converts therefore look not upon this World, and they have good reason not to look upon it as so desirable a thing. Conversion lies much in *keeping our selves unspotted from the World*, and in *denying worldly lusts and desires*, Jam. 1. 27. Tit. 2. 12.

1. The Convert has *no friendship with the World*, because the *friendship of the World is Enmity with God*, Jam. 4. 4. He values not the Worlds Favour above Gods, he fears not the Worlds Displeasure more than the Lords Anger; he prizes the Love of God and the light of his Countenance, above all the respects and smiles of Mammon: And if he has but a comfortable assurance that the Lord is at Peace, he does not so much care though all the World fall out with him. Indeed in a *sense*, the Convert is a *true Friend* to the World; he Pities and Prayes for the World, and the World is spared for the Saints sake that

are in it, and *are to be born into it*. A Woman that is condemned to dye, if ſhe be with Child, ſhe is ſpared till delivered: In this World *many are to be born* that *will be born again*, and hence it is that the *Sentence* of the *VVorlds burning* is not yet *Executed*. But in the Apoſtles ſenſe the Convert ceaſes to be the Worlds friend; he will be religious though the World be never ſo angry, he will look towards Heaven, he will *look at the things unſeen, which are eternal*, though the World never give him a good look more.

2. The Convert is not *conformed to this VVorld*. Conformity in this ſenſe is a damnable thing, and inconſiſtent with Converſion; how plain is the Apoſtles Prohibition, *Rom.* 12. 2. *And be not conformed to this VVorld, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God.* The Conformiſt to this World minds not the Will of God, nor what is good and acceptable to Him: He that is truly Converted is otherwiſe minded, he diſlikes the manners, and *eſcapes the pollutions of the VVorld*; *he runs not out with others to the ſame exceſs of riot*, he dares not follow a multitude to do evil, becauſe deſtruction and miſery are in their wayes; but according

cording as the Apoſtle directs, *He lives the reſt of his time in the fleſh, not to the luſts of men, but to the will of God*, 1 Pet. 4. 2.

3. The Convert is not a *Lover and Chuſer of the VVorld, as if it were the beſt Portion*: He is made ſeriouſly to take notice of the *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit* that is found in the enjoyment of the World, and how ſhort a time at longeſt 'tis to be enjoyed; he concludes, 'twere better never to have been *a Man*, than to be only *a Man of the VVorld*, better never to have *lived*, than to be put off *with a Portion here in this life*, Pſal. 17, 14. Better never to have had a Soul, than to *diſappoint* it with the things of the World, which are unſuitable to its nature, and inſufficient for its ſatisfaction, and to *loſe it* for the gaining of ſuch poor things as theſe. *Contempt of this VVorld* is always an ingredient in ſincere Converſion; the higheſt Profeſſion, the moſt heavenly Language, argues but the greater Hypocriſie, if the Heart be earthly: Thoſe Hearts that chiefly mind earthly things, ſhould meditate Terrour when they read 1 *Joh.* 2. 15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

4. The Convert is *no longer acted by the*

ſpirit of this World: 2 Cor. 2. 12. *Now we have received not the ſpirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God:* And how infinitely more excellent, deſirable and durable, are the things which are freely given of God in the Goſpel, than all things which the World can boaſt of? The ſpirit of the World, is the *genius, nature and diſpoſition of the World*; ſuch a Mind, ſuch a Will, ſuch Affections as the Men of the World have. The Convert ſees not with the Worlds eyes, judges not as the World judges, but diſcerns between things that differ, and approves the things that are moſt excellent; his enlightned and rectified Judgment weighs the things of the World in the ballance of the Sanctuary, and he writes *Tekel* upon them all, becauſe being *weighed they are found wanting*.

5. The Convert *uſes this World as not abuſing it:* He calls himſelf bruitiſh becauſe of his former affecting it, becauſe it made him ſuch a *Fool*, ſuch a *Slave*; but now he recovers his Dominion over the Creatures which was loſt by the fall: Earth is now *under foot*, which is its *proper place*, and the things of it he improves for God. He lives as a Stranger and Pilgrim, and he puts the *Mammon of unrighteouſneſs* to holy

ly and gracious uſes, and doing good with the World, he ſcapes the evil of it, and becomes more and more meet for the heavenly Inheritance.

And are Converts thus indeed turn'd from Sin? do they thus come out from the World? Lord! how few will be ſaved! for how ſmall is the number of thoſe who are thus Converted! You ſee what Converſion is with reference to the World.

Thirdly, Converſion may be conſidered with reference to the *Sinner himſelf*, and ſo it includes that great Chriſtian Duty of *Self-denyal*. What a ſtrange Creature has Sin turn'd Man into! that he muſt *beware of himſelf*, *eſpecially* as one that is *falſe, and a Foe to himſelf*; he is to flye from *Sin*, he is to reſiſt *Satan*, and from *Self* how unconceivable is his danger! Where ſhall Man find his greateſt Enemy? not among his moſt malicious Neighbours, not among the evil Angels, though theſe as ſo many *roaring Lions*, *go about ſeeking whom they may devour*; but Man muſt look into his own Breaſt, and ranſack his own Heart, and there he will find the moſt deadly Foe; his Deſtruction is of *himſelf*, he *procures evil to himſelf*, Jer. 2. 17. *He treaſures up unto* himſelf Wrath *againſt the*

day of wrath, Rom. 2. 5. Our Lord very well knew how pernicious and fooliſh Mans *own Counſels* are, how hurtful his *own Luſts and Inclinations*, therefore he preſſes Self-denyal upon all his followers, *Luk.* 9. 23. *He ſaid unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs daily and follow me:* The true Convert does thus, for he apprehends what a *Party* there is *within* him, that is indeed *againſt* him.

1. He that is Converted, *mortifies Self-love:* The Apoſtle makes it a great part of the Sin, and a great reaſon of the perilouſneſs of the latter dayes, that *Men ſhall be lovers of their own ſelves*, 2 Tim. 3. 1, 2. There is an *holy Self-love*, which is a Love to the Soul, and that's a Duty; and in this ſenſe only true Saints are true *Self-lovers*, and God loves them not the *leſs*, but the *more* for being ſo. There is a *carnal Self-love*, when the Fleſh is loved and gratified, when the Fleſh is the *pondus*, weight that ſets all wheels a going, when the Fleſh is the center in which all lines meet: This Self-love excludes the Love of *God*, of the *Soul*, and of the *Brother*, and is a great and fruitful root from whence innumerable other Sins do grow. The Converts mortifie this Love of their Fleſh, conſider-

ſidering they have Souls that deſerve and need their Love and Care, and whoſe Intereſt ought mainly to be minded.

2. He that is Converted is *not a Self-flatterer.* The wicked man *flatters himſelf in his own eyes*, until the Puniſhment inflicted upon him proves his *Iniquity is hateful* in the eyes of God, *Pſal.* 36. 2. He loves thoſe that flatter him, he ſayes to the *Seers, ſee not, to the Prophets, propheſie not unto me right things, propheſie unto me ſmooth things*, though you *propheſie Deceits.* The Convert is truly willing to know himſelf, and the worſt of himſelf, he can't endure Dawbers, the Word that ſearches moſt is moſt acceptable. He *comes to the Light*, that what is good in him may be diſcovered, and that God who has wrought that good may have the Glory, *Joh.* 3. 21. and that all remaining evil may be manifeſt, that it may be mortified.

3. He that is Converted is *not a Self-pleaſer:* To be all for pleaſing his external ſenſes he accounts *bruitiſh*, to pleaſe his fancy he eſteems *below reaſon*, and *contrary to Grace*; and that 'tis the higheſt madneſs, for the ſake of ſinful and ſenſual Pleaſures, to incurr the Diſpleaſure and Indignation of the Almighty, and venture the enduring of eternal Vengeance. *Moſes* ſhewed the truth

truth of his Converſion, in undervaluing the *Pleaſures of Sin that were but for a ſeaſon*, Heb. 11. 25. He contemn'd the Delight of *Pharaoh*'s Court, the Honour of *being the Son of* Pharaoh's *Daughter*, and *choſe Affliction with the People of God*, that he might find a truer, an higher, a better Delight in God himſelf.

4. He that is Converted is *not a Self-ſeeker*: He is not taken as once he was, with ſecular honour, and temporal gain, ſuch things ſway not with him, when the Honour of God and his own Salvation lye at ſtake. In different reſpects he is the *greateſt* Self-ſeeker and the *leaſt*: No man minds his trueſt Intereſt, durable Riches, and everlaſting Glory, but himſelf, and ſuch as are like-minded; and yet he can bear the ſcorn of Men, and the *ſpoyling of his Goods*, and if *Chriſt be but magnified*, he can lye in the duſt contentedly: He ſeeks not great things for himſelf on Earth; the Praiſe of Men he looks upon as empty and dangerous breath, without Gods approbation, and the gaining of the whole World nothing, if God be not reconciled and enjoyed. How far were the Apoſtles from being Self-ſeekers, when that they might make Chriſt known in the World, and perſwade the World to receive him and be ſaved by him, they were

were contented to be made a *ſpectacle to Angels and Men, to be hungry, thirſty, naked, buffeted, and without any certain dwelling-place*; nay, to be eſteemed the *very filth of the World, and the off-ſcouring of all things*, 1 Cor. 4. 9, 13.

5. He that is Converted is *not Self-confident*: He dares not glory in his own Wiſdom, for God has *made fooliſh the wiſdom of this World*, 1 Cor. 1 20. He dares not truſt to his Strength, for God *gives Power to the faint*, and that perceive they *have none of their own* to help themſelves, *Iſa.* 40. 29. He dares not think that his righteouſneſs is ſatisfactory to divine Juſtice, or meritorious of divine Favour, but cryes out with *David*, *Enter not into Judgment with thy ſervant, for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified*, Pſal. 143. 2. He that places his Confidence in himſelf, plainly diſcovers great *Ignorance of himſelf*, and alſo of *Gods deſign in the Goſpel*, which is, that his *Grace in Chriſt* may be *All*, and that *no Fleſh may glory* in the Lords Preſence.

6. He that is Converted, is *engaged in a Combat with himſelf*; his Heart is a Field, where many a Battel is fought between him and his proud Self, between him and his luſtful Self, between him and his worldly Self, between him and his unbelieving Self.

Self. 'Tis eaſier to reſiſt the very Prince of the Devils, and to withſtand the importunity and ſolicitations of Satans Inſtruments; but for a Man to be at defiance with himſelf, to be continually almoſt chiding, loathing, croſſing and oppoſing himſelf, *in this* lies the moſt difficult part of the Chriſtian warfare. Within the Converts *own Breaſt* is the very *heat of the Battel*; Oh what ſtriving is there againſt *Self-exalting Imaginations!* what ſtruggling againſt *Self-will*, and *ſelfiſh affections and deſigns!* And with good reaſon is Self thus oppoſed by the Convert, ſince Self does ſo much oppoſe the Converts Salvation.

And if *turning* be thus *Self-denying*, the prevalency of carnal Intereſt, and the power of Self among Profeſſors of Religion, proves that though they are externally Called, yet there are few ſincere Converts among them: How *tender* are they in point of *Gain*, and *Honour, and Reputation!* every perſon and thing that *here* ſtands in their way is a great *eye-ſore: Religion* ſhall *ſtoop* to worldly *Intereſt*, *this* ſhall be ſecured, though *Faith and Conſcience* be caſt overboard. Thus have I conſider'd Converſion with reference to the *Sinner himſelf.*

Fourthly, Converſion may be conſider'd with

with reference *to God:* The Sinner forſakes him, and rebels againſt him, the Convert returns and ſubmits to him. 'Tis God that calls to Converſion, and 'tis Converſion to himſelf that he calls for, *Zech.* 1. 3. *Turn ye unto me, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, and I will turn unto you, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.*

1. Converſion is a *turning to the living and true God*; 1 Theſ. 1. 9, 10. *Ye turned to God from Idols, to ſerve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from Heaven, even Jeſus who delivered us from the Wrath to come:* The glorious and gracious Jehovah, who made Heaven and Earth, and preſerves and governs all things; who promiſed a *Seed* to *Adam* that ſhould *bruiſe the Serpents Head*, who renewed his *Covenant with Abraham*, who ſpake from *Mount Sinai* to *Iſrael*, who has deliver'd *lively Oracles* by the *Prophets and Apoſtles* in the Holy Scriptures; and who is the *God and Father of Jeſus Chriſt*, and has ſent him to be a *Propitiation* and Saviour; this Jehovah is the only living and true God, and as ſuch, is known and acknowledged by every true Convert.

2. Converſion is a turning *to God for Himſelf*, Jer. 4. 1. *If thou wilt return, O Iſrael, ſaith the Lord, return unto me*, q. d. *O Iſrael*, expect all ſafety, protection, all manner

manner of Benefits and Bleſſings from *my hand*; but place thy *principal happineſs* in *my ſelf*. The Hypocrite ſeems to turn and ſeek unto God; but 'tis for the Creatures ſake; his Security or advantage is in his Eye. The Convert by the *Creatures is led unto God*, and though he ſhould receive never ſo many temporal Mercies, he would look upon himſelf as miſerable, unleſs with the Mercies he enjoyed the Father of them.

3. Converſion is a *chooſing of God before all things*, ſuch a choice is wiſe and rational. *Moſes ſaw Him that is Inviſible*, and ſaw ſo much in him; that the *Egyptian* Crown and Throne were eſteemed trifles in compariſon of Communion with the God of *Iſrael*. The Pſalmiſt though he had juſt had a ſight of worldly Mens Proſperity and was ready to *envy* them their happineſs; yet *going into the Sanctuary* he did *diſcern that in God*, which eclips'd and obſcured the whole World with all its Wealth and Dignity, and made it look but like a great and empty Bubble; and he cries out, *Pſal.* 73. 25. *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee! and there is none on Earth that I deſire beſides Thee!* The Convert chuſes God for his Portion, and accounts *no other heritage ſo goodly*. He had rather

rather have the Lord to be his God, *his own God*, as the Phraſe is, *Pſal.* 67. 6. and to enjoy *the light of his countenance*, than to have the greateſt abundance of *Corn and Wine*, and whatſoever on Earth is call'd deſirable.

There is a twofold enjoyment of God, on *Earth*; and in *Heaven*. On Earth God is *known but in part*, and Sin remaining in the very beſt, is ſtill *a bar unto compleat Communion with him*, which ſhall be the priviledge of all that come to Heaven. The Convert values feliowſhip with God in his Ordinances; but principally longs for the *Viſion of God face to face in his Kingdom*; he begs to be kept in the path of Life, and to be brought at laſt to that *heavenly City* which *has eternal foundations*; in which God does for ever vouchſafe his *glorious Preſence*, where God himſelf is *All in All*, where *there is fulneſs of Joy and Pleaſures forevermore*, *Pſal.* 16. *ult.*

4. Converſion is a *devoting the whole Man to God*. 'Tis ſaid of the *Macedonians*, that moſt willingly they gave of their ſubſtance to a good uſe, and *they gave their own ſelves unto the Lord*, 2 Cor. 8. 5. *Whoſe I am*, ſays the Apoſtle, *and whom I ſerve*, Act. 27. 23. 'Tis *the very Language* of a

Convert

Convert, and he ſpeaks it from his Heart. The Convert is ſenſible he *is not a Debtor to the fleſh, to live after the fleſh*: Fleſhly Luſts do *war againſt the Soul*, and he that *lives after the fleſh ſhall dye*. Neither is he a Debtor to the World, the World is not worthy of his Heart, which can neither be a ſufficient Price for Mans Redemption, nor affords him any true Contentment: But the Convert reckons himſelf a *Debtor to God*, as his *Creator*, *Preſerver*, *Owner*, *Redeemer*, and to be under innumerable Obligations to be ſubject to Him, and active and zealous in his Service. Well may *Religion* be ſtyled *Righteouſneſs*, for all the acts of it, which the Lord calls for, he *juſtly claims* as *due* to him: And ſince thoſe bonds which Converts are under, are *bands of Love* and Kindneſs as well as Duty, 'tis moſt unreaſonable for any to ſay, as *Pſal.* 2. 3. *Let us break theſe bands aſunder, and caſt away theſe cords from us.*

5. Converſion to God is *a transformation into his Image and Likeneſs*; 2 Cor. 3. 17, 18. *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*; *and we all with open face beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image from glory to glory.* The Apoſtle intimates, that the Image of God is Mans glory, and that his glory

glory is the greater, the more fully this Image is inſtampt upon him, and that all that are Converted are changed into this Image: Not a true Convert but *partakes of the divine Nature, and eſcapes the Corruption that is in the World.* This Image of God conſiſts in *Knowledge, Righteouſneſs, Holineſs, and Dominion over the Creatures:* All theſe things were loſt by *Adam*'s defection, all are recovered in Converſion, and the recovery is more compleat as Converſion is progreſſive. The Convert is called out of Darkneſs into marvellous Light, his Heart is made pure and clean, his Works are righteous, and the Creatures no longer Lord it over him, but he makes them ſubſervient to the religious deſigns he is carrying on. Converts are in a ſenſe the only Rulers in the World; the greateſt Monarchs that are graceleſs, are ſlaves to their ambition, carnal intereſts, and to divers luſts and pleaſures; but the Converted are more than conquerors, and recover that dominion over the Creatures which was loſt in the firſt tranſgreſſion.

6. Converſion is a *directing all we do to the glory of God.* They that take aim, ſhut one of their Eyes: The Convert in his aims and ends has a ſingle Eye, Gods honour is deſigned above all. He that makes not *God*

his *End*, has not yet *begun* to turn to him in sincerity. The Convert in his *civil* actions, as buying and selling, in his *natural* actions, as eating and drinking, does what he does *to the glory of God*, as the Apostle enjoyns, 1 *Cor.* 10. 31. And especially in his *religious* actions, his design is that the Name of God may be hallowed and glorified; in the desiring and working out his own Salvation, he designs that *God may have the glory of saving him*, as well as he himself *the happiness of being saved*. Thus have I shewn what Conversion is with reference *to God*.

Fifthly, Conversion may be considered with reference *to Jesus the Mediatour*. As God is He *to* whom we turn, so Christ is He *through* whom we do it; and indeed there is *no coming to the Father* but by *this one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus*, Joh. 14. 6. 1 Tim. 2. 5. Christ is both *God* and *Man* in one person, and *two Natures* so *very distinct*, and the *one* so infinitely *above* the other, being united in the Person of Christ; hence follows an *Union and Reconciliation* between *God* and those of the *Children of Men*, for and of whom Christ undertakes to be an Advocate, a Surety, a Saviour and Redeemer.

In

In Conversion there is an absolute necessity of using the Mediation of Christ; it is by the Grace of Christ strengthening that the Sinner is enabled to turn to God, and 'tis upon the account of the Obedience and Intercession of the Lord Jesus, that the returning Sinner does find acceptance with the Father. Christ is the Lord whom the Prophet speaks of, *Isa.* 45. 24, 25. *Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength, in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* Now how the Convert in his turning has *his Eye* and *Heart on Christ*, I shall shew you in these particulars:

1. The Convert is perswaded *that God is accessible in Christ Jesus*; Eph. 3. 12. *In whom we have boldness and access with confidence, by the Faith of him.* God is not implacable, he is not inexorable, but ready to forgive, and plenteous in Mercy unto all that cry for it: Christ *has satisfied the Justice of God* to the very *utmost of its demands*, he paid more to Justice in *an hour*, than Believers could have paid *unto Eternity*: Christ can *appease the Almightie's fiercest Anger*, and his Blood can do away the greatest transgressions, 1 *Joh.* 1. 7. *The Blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* The Convert is encouraged by the *Blood* of Christ,

which is the Blood of him that is God, and by the *rich Grace* of God in him, *Eph.* 1. 7. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveneſs of ſins, according to the riches of his Grace:* Indeed the Scripture ſpeaks of *one* Sin that is *unpardonable*, that *againſt the Holy Ghoſt*; but the reaſon is not, as if it were *too great* for the Blood of Chriſt to procure the Pardon of it; but becauſe ſuch Sinners *reſiſt and do deſpight to the Spirit* of Chriſt, and will by no means be brought to him, but *trample under foot the Son of God, and count his Blood an unholy and common thing*. The Remedy is *not inſufficient* for them, but they perverſely *deſpiſe*, and will by *no means uſe it*, and therefore periſh.

2. The Convert is *encouraged by the general, ſerious, frequent, gracious invitations made in the Goſpel:* All *Offenders* are invited to Chriſt who is Sinners *Peace*, for the *Chaſtiſement of their peace was upon him*, Iſa. 53. 5. The *Captives* are invited to this Redeemer, that they may have liberty by him, and ſuch liberty as is *freedom indeed*, *Joh.* 8. 36. All thirſty Souls are invited to come to him for the Waters of Life, *Rev.* 22. 17. *Whoſoever will, let him drink of the waters of Life freely:* Finally, *the loſt* that ſee themſelves to be loſt, are invited to come

come to Christ for Salvation, and *He is able to save unto the uttermost*, Heb. 7. 25. Whatever the guilt of Sin is, whatever the pollutions are, the Blood, the Spirit of Christ are offer'd in the Gospel, and are sufficient for the justifying and washing of the guilty and defiled.

3. The Convert *receives Christ, and relyes upon him for Pardon, Grace, and Life eternal:* He is troubled that he received him no sooner, that his Heart was with a foolish Obstinacy shut against him for so long a time, though *to receive him, is to have power to become a Son of God*, Joh. 1. 12. But now his Heart is open to entertain this Lord of life, this Prince and maker of Peace; his accepting Christ is a voluntary, a glad, a thankful acceptance; and in *Him*, not in the *Flesh*, he places his confidence and hopes; he despairs in himself, and every thing else, but he abounds in hope, because of that *superabundant Grace* that *reigns by Jesus Christ*, Rom. 5. 20, 21. And because the Apostle plainly sayes, *He that spared not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. 8. 32. The Converts eye is fixt on Jesus at his very first Conversion, and still he is *looking to him*, to his very dissolution; he sees in Him

an *everlaſting Righteouſneſs*, ἀ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα, *an all-fulneſs of Grace*; on Chriſt therefore he depends for acceptance with God, and all needful Strength and Grace, until he comes to Glory.

4. The Convert *ſubmits to the eaſie Yoak of Chriſt Jeſus*: He walks no longer after the *courſe of this World*, he fulfils no longer the *deſires of the Fleſh and of the Mind*, he caſts off the Yoak of Mammon and of Satan, and now his great Inquiry is, what the Lord Jeſus would have him to do? that he may do according to his Will: He looks on Chriſt as Law-giver and King in *Sion*, and his Laws he is willing to obey; and he remembers that Chriſt *endured the Croſs*, and was *Crown'd with thorns*, therefore he ſtumbles not at the Croſs, but *takes it up* and *follows the Lamb*; and reckons thoſe are *light Afflictions which are but for a moment*, and that they ought not to be feared or ſhunn'd, when they can't be avoided without ſin, being they *work for* thoſe that undergo them, *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

5. The Convert *loves the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity, and lives by Faith on him, as long as he lives here in the fleſh*. Chriſt has the higheſt room in every true Converts Heart, he counts *all things loſs, that Chriſt may be gained*,

gained, Phil. 3. 8. And 'tis but reaſon that Chriſt ſhould be *beſt* loved *by him*, whoſe *love to him* is greateſt and moſt beneficial, and who is *altogether lovely*, Cant. 5. *ult. Ubi amor, ibi oculus*; where the Love is, the Eye is. Chriſt being loved, the Convert's eye of Faith is ſet alſo upon him, and he ſtayes on Jeſus *the Author and finiſher of his Faith*, that he may be preſerved in a ſtate of Grace, and ſtrengthned unto all continuance and perſeverance in well doing. Let ſenſeleſs Souls, that are without knowledge and experience, call this *Reſting* a *Lolling* on Chriſt, notwithſtanding their Ignorance and Blaſphemy, the Members of the true Church will (according as the Holy Ghoſt by wiſe *Solomon* expreſſes it) *lean upon their Beloved*, Cant. 8. 5. in their paſſage through the *Wilderneſs* of this World, that they may be conducted and brought ſafe unto the heavenly and *incorruptible Inheritance*. Thus much of Converſion with reference to *Jeſus the Mediatour*.

Sixthly and Laſtly, Converſion may be conſidered with reference *to the Word of God*: This Word is the way into which every true Convert turns, *Pſal.* 119. 59, 60. *I thought on my wayes, and turned my feet*

unto thy teſtimonies ; I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments. The Converts *Eye* is turned to *look* into this Word of God, his *Ear* is turned to *hearken* to it, his *Feet* are turned to *walk according* to it, and his very *Heart* is turned to *love* it: As 'tis natural to new born Babes to deſire the Mothers or Nurſes Milk, ſo 'tis ſpiritually natural to them that are Regenerate and Converted, to deſire the Word of God, 1 *Pet.* 2. 2. *As new born Babes deſire the ſincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.*

1. The Converts *natural enmity againſt the Word of God is cured*; he neither with the *Jews* counts the Goſpel a *ſtumbling-block* and matter of offence, nor with the *Greeks* does he eſteem it *fooliſhneſs*; he does not look upon the *Myſteries* of the Word as *abſurd*, nor upon the *ſtricteſt Rules* as *unreaſonable:* He owns the *Authority* of God in his Word, and acknowledges his *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, in giving ſuch a *Teſtimony* of his Will upon *record*, as is ſo *faithful and worthy of all acceptation.*

2. The Convert *approves the whole of the Word of God:* He prizes Truth and is afraid of Error, for there are *damnable Errors* in Judgment, as well as *damnable Immoralities* in Practice. They that are *led away with the Error*

Error of the wicked, do *wreſt the Scriptures*, and that is not without danger of *Deſtruction*, 2 Pet. 3. 16, 17. The Convert ſees a need of *threatnings* to deter him from ſin; and to keep his fleſh in awe, that it become not head-ſtrong againſt the Spirit: He likes the *Commands* as well as the Promiſes, and is perſwaded 'tis a *privilege to work for God* as well as an encouragement that his *labour ſhall not be in vain*, 1 Cor. 15. 58. He concludes whatever God has ſpoken, is ſpoken for his good, therefore diſlikes nothing he has ſaid. The Apoſtle *conſented* to the *goodneſs of the Law*, and was troubled that ſo much *evil was preſent with him*, which hindred that exact obedience he deſired to yield, *Rom.* 7. 16, 21. And the Pſamiſt ſpeaks fully, *Pſal.* 119. 128. *I eſteem all thy Commandments concerning all things to be right, and I hate every falſe way.*

3. The Convert *performs the word of God unto the end*, his Faith is not temporary, nor his obedience forced by a preſent fear, vaniſhing away as ſoon as ever the danger is apprehended to be over. The *righteouſneſs* that is as *the morning cloud*, is hypocritical and unacceptable. The truly *righteous man holds on his way and waxes ſtronger and ſtronger*, Job 17. 9. The entrance

trance of the word, gives that *light* and ſtrength to the Convert as heartens him to go on; the more he obeys, the greater cauſe and reaſon he ſees to be ſtill more obedient; the greater progreſs he makes in his courſe, the nearer he comes to the *prize*; the glory of that prize makes him *preſs forward*, and run the faſter.

Thus have I opened the Nature of Converſion. Much is included in it: Happy thoſe that have felt what I have ſpoken. But what a Multitude of Profeſſors are excluded out of the number of ſincere Converts! To how many a Man may Conſcience ſay, *Thou haſt no part, no experience in this matter, thy heart is not right with God. Thy beloved luſts, thy idolized gain and pleaſures, thy unreaſonable ſelf-confidence, have hindred thy coming to Chriſt, thy turning to God, and obeying his Word to this day.*

In the third place I am to tell you, what are the *Properties* of Converſion. Here I ſhall obſerve ſeveral things concerning it which will help you the *better to underſtand it*, and may ſerve for a *trial* whether you are indeed converted.

1. Converſion is both a *duty and a privilege*. Conſcience ſhould take notice of

nd with authority and vehemency urge he Sinner to the duty; and the Heart hould be forward to Converſion; ſince it s ſuch a Priviledge. The Goſpel *calls all* hat hear it, to *turn to God*, and layes hem under *an obligation* to do it. And Converſion being a Submiſſion to the whole Will of God; it is the ſumm of ll the duties which he requires. Turnng to God is a conſenting to do and ſuffer whatever he commands, and continung a Convert is a *ſtanding perfect* (with n evangelical perfection, which is Sincerity) *and compleat in all the Will of God*, Col. 4. 12. And as the Convert does his uty; ſo the doing of it is beneficial to imſelf. Is it not a priviledge, and every ay for his trueſt intereſt, to be *near God?* o be received into *his favour?* and to be nder the bleſſed *influence* of his *powerful nd ſpecial Grace?* 'Twas good counſel that *Eliphaz* gave, though he gave it to a better man than himſelf, *Job* 22. 21. *Acquaint ow thy ſelf with him*; (and he explains hat by *returning* to the Almighty) *and be peace, thereby good ſhall come to thee.*

2. Converſion meets with *great oppoſition.* What in the whole World is oppoed more? The Children of men go by roves in the *broad way that leads to Deſtruction,*

ction, and they can't endure that *any* ſhould *part company*; if any begin to make a ſtand, and *run not with them to the ſame exceſs of riot*, they *think it ſtrange*, and their *tongues ſpeak evil* of them, 1 *Pet.* 4. 4. if they do not make them feel the *violence* of their *hands* alſo.

But if *Earth* is *troubled* when any are converted, *Hell* is much more *moved*; when a *Sinner turns*, Satan loſes an *Houſe* where he dwelt, and an *Heart* which was a *Throne* where he *reigned*. And for that *proud ſpirit*, to *loſe a vaſſal*, nay to be forced to *flee from him*, (as the promiſe is he *ſhall* upon *reſiſtance*) Jam. 4. 7. whom before *he led captive at his pleaſure*; this muſt needs be a very great *grief* and *vexation*; eſpecially ſince his *malice* alſo is diſappointed; for ſo many Souls as are converted, ſo many Souls *he* is hindred from devouring and deſtroying. How many are the *wiles and devices* of Satan to hinder mans Converſion and Salvation! *Sin is the work of the Devil*, 1 Joh. 3. 8. Converſion from it, is his *Envy* and his *Torment*. He can patiently enough behold his Subjects growing wealthy and great in the World; let their Bags be never ſo full of Gold; nay let there be *Crowns* upon their *Heads*, and *Scepters* in their *Hands*

his

his envy is not ſtirr'd at ſuch poor things as theſe; as long as there is no *true ſaving Grace* in their *Hearts*. But when any are about to be tranſlated into the Kingdom of Chriſt and to turn to God; Ah! now they become *friends* to themſelves *indeed*, and therefore this *Enemy* is ſo *much troubled*.

Yet I muſt add; that the greateſt oppoſition is from the Convert *himſelf*, and from his *own carnal Heart*. How ſtrongly does carnal reaſon argue againſt *the myſtery of God and of the Father and of Chriſt*! Col. 2. 2. How does it plead for things that are *ſeen*; becauſe *preſent*, and in *actual poſſeſſion*! It ſaies, a *World in hand* is a great deal better than a *World in hope*, which no man alive ever ſaw. It thinks of what on Earth is moſt deſirable, and layes it before the Sinners eyes, that ſtill earthly things may take his Heart; and repreſents Religion as a *ſad and ſour thing*; whoſe *ſtrictneſs* is a meer *Purgatory*, if not an *Hell*; and the *ſufferings* that attend it as *intolerable*. And if carnal reaſon diſſwade from Converſion, the ſtubborn will, the corrupt and inordinate affections, the violent and unruly paſſions, ſwell *like the troubled Sea*; and who but *He* that made and rules the Ocean, can aſſwage them?

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The Sinners *brow* is repreſented as *braſs*, *Iſa.* 48. 4. What can make him *bluſh*? His *Neck* as an *Iron ſinew*, what can make him yield? his *Heart* as an *Adamant ſtone*, what can make him *ſenſible*? O Convert, be *confounded*, becauſe *thou thy ſelf* didſt *moſt oppoſe* thy *own Converſion*; and admire *victorious Grace*, that both *conquer'd* and *chang'd corrupted Nature.*

3. Converſion is *not to be wrought but by the mighty Power of God.* Converſion implies a *New Creation*, and a *Creating Power* is *no leſs* than that of *God. David* cryes out, *Create in me a clean Heart*, Pſal. 51. 10. *q. d. O Lord! thou who madeſt Heaven and Earth out of* nothing, *produce* purity *in my* Heart, *of which there is* nothing *by nature, and ſo* little left *ſince my* fall, *nay ſo much of* ſin *which is quite contrary.* Converſion implies a Reſurrection, who can raiſe the dead at the laſt day but God only? And who can *quicken the dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*, but himſelf alone? *Eph.* 2. 1. and *v.* 4. 5, 6. *But God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us; even when we were dead in Sins, hath quickned us together with Chriſt; by Grace ye are ſaved; and hath raiſed us up together, and made us ſit together in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus.* The ableſt Preach-

Preacher must say, *Power to convert is not in me*; Ordinances must say, *This Power is not in us*. The Word it self plainly signifies, that without Gods Co-operation, it works not to *Conversion and Life*, but to *blinding*, *hardening* and *death*. The Axe builds not the house, the Pencil makes not the Picture, nor the Preacher or Sermon the Convert; but the *Grace* of God *is* and does *all*.

4. Conversion is by Grace that is *irresistible*. Not that there is *Coaction* or *Compulsion* in the case; you must not imagine that a man is converted by *force*; his *Will* still remaining *against* it. But *velle resistere sublatum est*. A Will to resist is taken away. *A Will to resist* there can be no longer, when *God works the will to yield*: Some do say, that God takes not away *purum* τὸ *posse nolle*, absolutely a *Power of being unwilling*, but effectually cures *actual unwillingness*, healing the Sinners *corrupt disposition* to resistance. It may justly be question'd, whether ever *any one* that *perisht*, resisted *so much Grace* as was *sufficient and effectual* to the *Conversion of any one* that was saved? *Augustine* uses three Adverbs to express the manner of Gods turning the Heart. *Omnipotenter*, *indeclinabiliter*, *insuperabiliter*, he does it Omnipotently,

potently, inſuperably, ſo that when he purpoſes to work Converſion the Sinner ſhall not have an Heart to decline it. Heark what our Lord ſayes, *Joh.* 6. 37. *All that the Father giveth me ſhall come to me, and him that comes to me I will in no wiſe caſt out.* In the *firſt Creation* the mighty God was *not withſtood*, but at his *powerful Word of command*, came all the Creatures out nothing, from the *ſmalleſt Atome* to the *higheſt Angel.* In the preſerving and governing of his Church he works and none can hinder, and ſurely he works irreſiſtibly in the gathering of his Church alſo. In the work of new Creation, there is *exceeding greatneſs of mighty Power* ſhewn forth, as the Apoſtle emphatically expreſſes it, *Eph.* 1. 19. and this Power changes and makes the Heart a new one, and a new Heart will certainly act like itſelf; turn to God, and incline to obey and follow him.

5. Converſion does not *exclude the Converts agency, but cauſes him to act aright.* Man is *paſſive* before he is active in Converſion: God does work *on* him and *in* him, and ſets *him* a working. *Facti ſumus opus Dei*, we are firſt *the workmanſhip of God*, Eph. 2. 10. afterwards *facimus opera Dei*, we do thoſe works which are good and

and which God commands us. Converſion is a rectifying Man's activity, making him active in a *good ſenſe*, who was before active in a *bad one*. The Underſtanding is active to apprehend, and to propound what is good, the Will is active to chuſe and embrace it, the Affections move towards it; but if you ask, *from whence is this activity?* the true Anſwer is, all is from the *powerfully quickening Grace of God*, 1 Cor. 15. 10. *By the Grace of God I am what I am, and I labour'd abundantly, yet not I, but the Grace of God that was with me.* Repenting, Believing, Turning, are Mans acts, but they are *done by a Power beyond his own*: 'Tis both abſurd and dangerous to ſay, that *Chriſt repented and turned for us*; but 'tis a great truth, to affirm that he ſtrengthens to Turn and to Repent, and 'tis through him that repenting and returning Sinners are accepted.

6. Converſion that is true, is *Preſent*. Delaying to turn, is indeed a *denying* to turn, and that with this aggravation, that there is an endeavour *deceitfully to hide* a *preſent unwillingneſs* to turn, with a *ſeeming willingneſs hereafter to do it*. The Apoſtle tells us, *Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. 6. 2. The Note of attention, *Behold*, is

uſed, and again repeated, and the inſtant of time, *Now*, is alſo 'twice mentioned: God is pleaſed *Now* to Call, it concerns Man, in point of Duty, Wiſdom and Safety, *Now* to Turn. When *the Holy Ghoſt ſayes, To day if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts*, Heb. 3. 7, 8. He plainly ſignifies, that no Sinner in the World, when he hears the Goſpel Call, ſhould *deferr* his Converſion *ſo much as one Day* longer: When the Pſalmiſt turned, *He made haſte and delayed not*, Pſal. 119. 60. which ſhewed that he turn'd indeed. To make haſte in Converſion, is to reſemble a Condemn'd Man, who haſtes to take out a proffer'd Pardon, becauſe every moment he is in danger of having the Sentence paſt upon him put in Execution; 'tis to reſemble a Man that makes haſte out of a City that is all in Flames.

7. Converſion that is true, is *without any deceitful Reſervations*. The ſincere Convert has not *an Heart and an Heart*, he does not divide it between *God and Mammon*, between *Chriſt and Belial*, between *Grace and Sin*; but conſents to be *wholly* the Lords, and at the Lords command and diſpoſe. That Converſion which is not with the *whole Heart*, is but a *feigned* Converſion, *Jer.* 3. 10. He that turns in truth,

truth, does not thus *capitulate* with God.

Such and such sins I will cast away, but *some* I resolve to *keep* and live in still, because my *Constitution* strongly inclines me to them, because I have *much Wealth* by them, and take *much Pleasure* in them; such and such Commands I will observe, but *some Precepts* are *too strict* for me, and these I will cast behind my back: I am willing to suffer *a little* for Christ, some reproach, some loss I am content to undergo, but I must be excused from Obedience, when I am called to *lose all* that I have in the World, and *my Life* too; Commands thus to suffer are hard sayings, who can hear them?

These reserves argue reigning and damnable Hypocrisie. The sound Convert is perswaded that God requires no more but what is *just and equal*, and really for the *good* of them that are to obey; hereupon, without any limitation or exception, he sayes, Lord, *Let thy Will be done*, by me, in me, and upon me; for thy *Will is my Sanctification*, and whatever thou command'st me to *do* or *suffer*, my Obedience whether *active* or *passive* will turn to *thy Glory*, to my *own* Comfort and Salvation.

8. Conversion is an *inward thing*; Rom.

2. 29. *He is a Jew that is one inwardly, and Circumciſion is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter, whoſe Praiſe is not of Men but of God.* There is that in Converſion which the eyes of thoſe that are about us cannot ſee, but 'tis *apparent* to *Him* that *ſearches the heart, and tries the reins, and has pleaſure in uprightneſs.* Converting Grace reaches the inward parts, pierces into the *very Soul*, and *there* the greateſt change is wrought; there is a new light in the Mind and Conſcience, there is a new bent and diſpoſition in the Heart; the Soul has *Wiſdom* put into it that before was *fooliſh*, becomes *true* to *God* and to it *ſelf*, that before was *falſe* and unfaithful unto *both*; there is a ſpiritual myſterious Life in the Soul, which before was dead, and *this Life is hid with Chriſt in God*, Col. 3. 3. He whoſe religion lies all in the *outſide*, he may look like a Convert, but never was Converted; *Colour* and *Form* he may have, but he wants *depth and ſubſtance.* The Heathen World ſaw a neceſſity of inward Religion: One ſays, that God is

Purâ mente colendus.

To be Worſhipped with a pure Mind. Another ſayes,

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Compoſitum jus faſque animo ſanctoſque receſſus ; Mentis, &c.

Honeſty and uprightneſs of Heart, and a moral Life, is more pleaſing to God than the coſtlieſt Sacrifices.

9. Converſion though an inward thing, yet *ſhews it ſelf viſibly in an anſwerable Converſation :* Grace is an active Principle, and where 'tis wrought in the Heart, 'twill have an apparent influence upon the outward man, 1 *Joh.* 3. 7. *Little Children, let no man deceive you ; he that* doth righteouſneſs *is righteous, even as he is righteous.* As the Apoſtle ſayes, *Shew me thy Faith by thy VVorks*, ſo may I ſay, *Shew me thy Converſion to God by thy godly Converſation.* If the Heart be turned, Grace will ſhew it ſelf in the *Eyes*, by looks that are humble and modeſt, a *Covenant being made with them*, that they *turn away from beholding Vanity.* Grace will breath out at the *lips* in Prayer, Praiſes, holy and edifying Communications : And the *Tongue* will be laid under the *law* of Love and *Kindneſs.* Grace will *tye up the Hands* from being employed in the *unfruitful works of darkneſs*, but active they ſhall be in deeds of Righteouſneſs, and open and liberal in acts of Charity and Mercy. Grace will hinder *the Feet* from running to evil ; the

Path ſhall be *ponder'd*, and the *Ways ſhall be eſtabliſhed.*

10. Converſion is *gradual.* We read in Scripture of different degrees of Grace: All Converts are not of the ſame Age, Strength and Stature. The Apoſtle ſpeaks of *little Children*, of *young Men*, and of *Fathers*, 1 Joh. 2. 12, 13. The little Child has as truly the Nature and all the Parts of a Man, as he that is grown up unto full maturity, but the grown Mans Parts and Members are much ſtronger than thoſe of the other. The young Convert has *all the Parts* of the new Creature, he is renewed *in the whole Man* after the Image of God, though he be not *wholly*, but *only in part* renewed: And 'tis the Work of God, who has *begun this good Work* of renovation, by degrees to *perfect* it.

The weakeſt Converts that are true, are not diſregarded, *Mat.* 12. 20. *A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, and ſmoaking flax ſhall he not quench, 'till he ſend forth judgment unto Victory:* The *bruiſed reed* ſignifies the Converts *great Infirmity*; the *ſmoaking flax*, the *noyſom mixture of much Sin* with that little Grace he has received; yet that Grace is not, though ſmall, deſpiſed, but cheriſhed and increaſed, and hereby our Lord ſhews himſelf the *true Meſſiah*,

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a Saviour to the uttermoſt: Thus Judgment is brought forth to Victory and Truth.

The ſtrongeſt Converts are ſtill to grow ſtronger: There is ſome remaining Sin in the beſt of Saints, which they are ſtill to be turning from and purging out; neither are any of them come ſo near, or become ſo like to God, but they may be *much nearer* and *liker* to him. At firſt breaking of the Day there is much darkneſs with the light, but by degrees the light increaſes, prevails againſt and expels the darkneſs: An apt Similitude to Illuſtrate the matter in hand, and to ſhew how that Converſion is by degrees compleated, *Prov.* 4. 18. *The path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

11. Converſion may *be known to be ſincere*: 'Tis *poſſible* for the Convert to be *aſſured* he is Converted; and what *Conſolation* is conſequent upon ſuch an Aſſurance! For if a Man know that he is turned to God, he may warrantably conclude that *God is turned unto him*; and he may as warrantably inferr, that being turned to him, *He will never turn away from him to do him good*, Jer. 32. 40. Wherefore are ſuch Characters and Signs of Converſion and Grace laid down in the Scripture,

ture, if the thing were not capable of being made evident? why are Prophets commanded to *comfort* the Converts, if none in this World could attain to a knowledge they are Converted? What Strangers are they to the *Spirit of Adoption*, to the Spirits *ſealing of Believers to the day of Redemption*, and his *bearing witneſs with their ſpirits that they are the Children of God*, *Rom.* 8. 16. who deny aſſurance of Converſion and Salvation?

That *Church* which has been ſo *ſevere* againſt *thoſe* that have *come out of her*, is alſo *hard-hearted* to *them* that *remain in Communion with her*, for ſhe keeps Souls in torment, by encouraging *Doubts and Fears*; and by calling a confidence of Salvation, though never ſo Scriptural, *Fiduciam ab omni pietate alienam*, an Impious Preſumption. But we are not to mind the dictates of ſuch a *Step-mother*, but hearken to a truer, a ſweeter and ſafer Guide, *Heb.* 3. 6. *But Chriſt as a Son over his own houſe, whoſe houſe are we, if we hold faſt the confidence and the rejoycing of the hope firm unto the end.*

12. Converſion that is true is *laſting*: None ever totally and finally turn away from God, who are indeed turn'd to him. Chriſt the Mediator has made a firm Peace between

between God, and thoſe that Believe and are Converted. The enmity between *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and between *them both* and *God*, is *ſlain* by the *croſs of Chriſt*, Eph. 2. 16. Upon their turning and believing the Lord enters into a Covenant which he will *never break*. And as Chriſt by his Death has made *an atonement*, and appeaſed his Fathers diſpleaſure; ſo his Crucifixion is effectual to the killing the *enmity*, that was *naturally* in *Converts againſt God*; their fleſh and the luſts of it are crucified, *Gal.* 5. 24. *They that are Chriſts have crucified the fleſh with the affections and luſts.* And *Rom.* 6. 6. *Knowing this, that our old man* is *crucified with Him, that the Body of Sin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve Sin.* True Converts ſhall perſevere, for Chriſt has prayed that they may be eſtabliſht, *kept from the evil of the World*, and *be with him where he is, and behold* (which does imply the enjoyment of) *his Glory*, Joh. 17. 15, 24. *Perſevering Grace* is one thing *Promiſed* in the Covenant of Grace: God himſelf engages for thoſe that turn to him in Truth, that *He* will not ſuffer them to apoſtatize and periſh, *Jer.* 32. 40. *I will put my fear into their Hearts that they ſhall not depart from me.* I have done with the *properties of Converſion.*

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In the fourth place I am to demonſtrate the *Neceſſity* of Converſion: What tongue can name the thing that is of *greater*, or of *ſo great* neceſſity? Ἑνὸς δέ ἐστι χρεία, this is indeed the *one thing neceſſary*. This has been neceſſary in *all ages*, ever ſince the fall of Man, and 'twill be neceſſary to the Worlds end, this is neceſſary for *all ſorts of Perſons*, Jews, Gentiles, high, low; rich, poor; young, old; male, female; bond, and free; all muſt of neceſſity periſh and that for ever without it. None but Converts *will* live *to* God in this World; *ſhall* live *with* Him in the World to come: We call Food to eat, and Raiment to put on, and Air to breath in, *Neceſſaries*; and ſo in a ſenſe they are, becauſe frail Nature cannot ſubſiſt without them; becauſe we muſt quickly *dye* without them: But how *much more* neceſſary is Converſion, without which the *precious Soul* muſt needs be *loſt*; and there is no eſcaping *eternal Death* and Condemnation! The Arguments to prove the neceſſity of Converſion are theſe following.

1. The firſt ſhall be drawn from *Gods frequent earneſt calls, and expreſs command.* What *voice* has ſounded more frequently from *Heaven*, than that which *requires* Man

Man to *return* to God? *Hoſ.* 14. 1. *O Iſrael, return to the Lord thy God, for thou haſt fallen by thine iniquities.* Jer. 3. 12. *Go and proclaim theſe words towards the North, and ſay: Return thou backſliding Iſrael, ſaith the Lord, and I will not cauſe my anger to fall upon thee, for I am merciful, ſaith the Lord; and I will not keep anger for ever.* The Proclamation was made towards the *North* whither *Iſrael* were carried Captives, to intimate their *departing from their own land*, was the *puniſhment* of their *departing from the Lord*, and ſincere *returning* unto God was the way to prevail with him *to turn again their captivity.* But now in Goſpel daies, the *Proclamation* is to be made Eaſt, and Weſt, and North, and South; even to *every Creature*, for now *God commands all men every where to repent* and return to him, *Act.* 17. 30.

This command is not properly a Commandment of the *Moral Law*, which requires exact obedience, and without allowing of a tranſgreſſours Converſion; *Curſes every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them*, Gal. 3. 10. Yet it muſt be added, that Converſion includes a *ſincere Obedience* to the *Moral Law*, as the rigour of it is *abated* under the Goſpel. Converſi-

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on is a command of a *remedying Law* given unto Man *after the fall.* To refuſe therefore to obey and to return, is not only an affront of Gods *Authority and Sovereignty*; but a contempt of his *gracious condeſcenſion* towards man, and ſurely *deſpiſing* of his *kindneſs and good will*, muſt needs provoke the *fiercer wrath.* Converſion, or *coming to God by Jeſus Chriſt*, is the great command of the Goſpel; know, that then when *Converſion is preſs'd* on Sinners, the *Goſpel is indeed preached to them.*

2. Converſion is neceſſary, becauſe *Mans trueſt happineſs lies in God; whom he is called to turn unto.* 'Tis the Miſery of Hell, that the wicked Spirits there, are ſeparated for ever from that God who made them. And 'tis the Worlds Miſery, that moſt men in it *are ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, without God in the World*, Eph. 2. 12. If God be not a mans Happineſs, what beſides can make him truly happy? Here all the Creatures manifeſt their *utter inſufficiency.* Did the Rich mans *purple cloathing, and fine linnen, and delicious fare*, make him an happy man? No, no; having this plenty and proſperity *without God*, it proved a means of loading him with the heavier guilt, and ſinking the Wretch into an hotter and lower Hell. Mans happineſs does

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certainly consist in his being *favoured* of God, in his being admitted unto *fellowship* with him, and *transformed into his image and likeness.*

Those that are *far from him*, are far from felicity; and are near perishing, and though never so *many*, though *whole Nations* turn to Him, the Allsufficient God, *has* enough, *is* enough, for the happiness of them All, *Psal.* 33. 12. *Blessed is the Nation whose God is the Lord, and the People whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.* God is able to *cure* the Soul of Man, and to *content* it. A sick man is uneasiy wherever you lay him, 'till his disease be healed: God can heal the Souls distempers; and satisfie its desires, and fill it to the uttermost of its capacity. Therefore the Apostle prayes for the *Ephesians*, Eph. 3. 19. *That they might be filled with all the fulness of God.* If our truest happiness be a necessary thing, then Conversion to God is necessary; who *himself* really is that truest happiness.

3. Conversion is necessary, because of *corrupted Nature, it's aversion from the Lord.* Man is truly called a *Transgressour from the womb*, for behold *he is shapen in iniquity, and in sin he was conceived*, Psal. 51. 5. Corrupted Nature is *Abyssus mali*, an evil

evil not to be fathom'd; they that are not *ſenſible* of it, plainly ſhew, that *ignorance* and *ſtupidneſs* is *added* to their *wickedneſs*. This corrupted Nature is called the *Old Adam*, which is full of *deceitful luſts*, a *Body of ſin*, which has a great many members. The higheſt faculties of the Soul are depraved. The *Will* is *unwilling to be be made clean*. The *Mind* is *carnal*, and *enmity againſt God, and is not ſubject to the Law of God, neither indeed can it be*, Rom. 8. 7.

And as man is born with a ſtrong Inclination to depart from God, ſo this inclination quickly ſhews it ſelf, *Pſal.* 58. 3. *The wicked are eſtranged from the womb, they go aſtray as ſoon as they be born, ſpeaking lies.* And this eſtrangement from God is more and more increaſed by acts of Sin. And is not Converſion *neceſſary*, where there is *ſuch a deep corruption and revolt?* If the greater the Sickneſs, the greater be the need of the Phyſicians skill and care; then Mans *alienation* from God, *highly needs converting Grace*, which may perſwade and enable him to return, and this Grace is ſufficient to do it, *Eph.* 2. 5. *Col.* 1. 21. *And you that were ſometimes alienated and enemies in your minds by reaſon of wicked, works, yet now hath he reconciled.*

4. Con-

4. Converſion is neceſſary, becauſe of *Gods Holineſs*. His Eye is a moſt piercing eye, looks into *all*, even the *darkeſt places*, ſees the wickedneſs that is conceal'd from men, and not in the leaſt ſuſpected by them. It looks into the very heart, and takes notice of all the imaginations, deſires, affections, projects that are evil. And as the Eye of God is *piercing*, ſo 'tis moſt *pure*. It ſees all iniquity, but does not *behold* ſo as to *approve* of any, *Pſal.* 5. 4, 5. *Thou art not a God that haſt Pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall evil dwell with thee; the fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in thy ſight, thou hateſt all the workers of iniquity.* Wicked men indeed are apt to think that *God is altogether ſuch an one as themſelves*; and becauſe they like their own evil wayes, they can't imagine that He does ſo much diſlike them: But the wicked man, as he is called a *fool*, ſo he never ſhews himſelf *more a fool*, than when he concludes, that though he ſins, *God is not angry at his ſin*: this *unbelief*, this *ſecurity*, this *moſt unworthy apprehenſion* of God, ſtirs up the *greater indignation* againſt him, *Pſal.* 50. 21, 22. *Thou thoughteſt I was altogether ſuch an one as thy ſelf; but I will reprove thee, and ſet thy Sins in order before thine eyes: Now conſider this ye that forget God, leaſt I tear*

you

you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. If God be *glorious in Holineſs*, if his *wrath be revealed againſt all unrighteouſneſs of men*; if Sin be the *abominable thing*, which his *Soul hates*; it undeniably follows, that *Turning from wickedneſs* is of *abſolute neceſſity*.

5. Converſion is neceſſary, becauſe of *Gods immutability and unchangeableneſs*. Can Gods pure and holy Nature ever alter? Can Light it ſelf become Darkneſs? can Perfection become Imperfect? Holy Angels indeed changed and became Devils; many of them Apoſtatized, they *kept not their firſt eſtate, but left their own habitation*; Man *was made upright*, but he changed, he ſinn'd, and loſt his *Glory* in which he was created. But the Apoſtle tells us, that *with God there is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning*, Jam. 1. 17. If the Holy God *cannot* change, then ſinful man *muſt*, elſe he cannot draw near to God, or be accepted of him; *Cleanſe your hands ye ſinners, purifie your hearts ye double minded*; and ſo *draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you*, Jam. 4. 8.

6. Converſion is neceſſary, becauſe it was *one great end of Chriſts dying*. Our Lord in his Crucifixion deſigned to ſave his Church from wrath, and this was a great

great benefit; he designed also to save his Church from Sin, *Tit.* 2. 14. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works:* And if the Punishment of Sin be a less evil than Sin it self, Redemption and Conversion from Sin is a greater benefit than bare deliverance from the Punishment due to it. Our Lord *suffer'd for sins, the just for the unjust,* that he might make the unjust to become just, and *might bring them unto God,* 1 Pet. 3. 18. The Son of God was made *Man,* he was made *Sin* and a *Sacrifice* for it, that *sinful* Men might turn and become *Saints*; he well knew how great an *Evil,* how dangerous an *Enemy,* how deadly a *Disease* Sin is, and consequently how *needful* it was his Church should be Converted and Delivered from it; therefore his great Love, Compassion and Care, moved him to *give himself for his Church; that he might sanctifie and cleanse it,* Eph. 5. 25, 26.

7. Conversion is necessary, because it is *one great reason of the Mission of the Spirit:* The *Father* sends the *Son* to dye, that *sin might dye,* and *Souls* converting from it *might live:* The *Son* sends the *Spirit,* now one great work of the Spirit is to *convince*

the World of ſin, to ſhew the neceſſity of Converſion, and to work that which is ſo neceſſary. Converſion is a very great thing, and of the higheſt conſequence, in which the *concurrence* of the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt*, is very much to be remarked: The *Father allows* of Converſion, gives the Sinner *leave* to turn, nay, *requires* him to do it, with an *encouraging ſignification*, that he will *receive* him in Chriſt: The *Son* by his *Incarnation*, and *Sufferings*, and *Interceſſion*, opens a *way* for the Sinner to come to the Father; and by the Price he paid, has *purchaſed* both the *Sinner* that is Converted, and *Converting Grace*, whereby he comes to be Converted indeed: The *Holy Ghoſt* works the *change* and *makes* the Convert; he *enlightens the Eyes of the Underſtanding*, he ſets the *Will at liberty*, 2 Cor. 3. 17. *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty:* Liberty, not only to *diſcern* what is good, but Liberty to *chuſe and embrace* it. Finally, He changes the Soul into the divine *Image*, and he *abides for ever* in the Church of Chriſt, that he may hinder this Image from ever being quite defaced, that he may perfect and compleat it.

8. Converſion is neceſſary *to fit for preſent Service and Duty*. An Unconverted Sinner

Sinner is a bad Tree, and all the Fruit he bears muſt needs be evil. Is it reaſonable to expect Figs from the Thiſtle, or Grapes from the Bramble or the Thorn? how can he whoſe Perſon is hateful to God, whoſe Heart never was ſanctified, do any action which may be truly pleaſing in Gods ſight? *Solomon* tells us, that not only the *Prayer of the wicked* is an *abomination* to God, becauſe he *turns away his ear from hearing the Law*, Prov. 28. 9. but alſo, that the *Ploughing of the wicked is ſin*, *Prov.* 21. 4. If *Ploughing* be taken *properly*, it intimates, that the wicked mans ordinary Employments are not without Provocation, becauſe he does nothing in a right manner, to a good end: If Ploughing be taken *Metaphorically*, for *Contriving and Deſigning*, it ſhews, that the Devices of the Heart of a wicked man are all vain and evil. Converſion therefore is very needful, that Man may become meet for the Service of God. The Converts Heart is right with God, deſires God himſelf chiefly, and in what he does, deſigns his Glory, and being made a *ſanctified Veſſel*, he is made fit *for his Lords uſe*, and *prepared unto every good work*, 2 Tim. 2. 21.

9. Converſion is neceſſary to *fit for future Reward*. We read that the unrighte-

ous ſhall *not Inherit the Kingdom of God*: Wicked ones are unfit to be among the Spirits of juſt Men who are made perfectly holy, to be among the Elect Angels who never ſinn'd, but are ever crying out, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!* Though Heaven is not merited by our turning Holy, yet Holineſs prepares and fits us for Heaven: The Apoſtle ſignifies, that Converts are *deliver'd from the power of darkneſs, and tranſlated into the Kingdom of the Son of God*, and hereby they *are made meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in light*, Col. 1. 12, 13. The ſame Apoſtle having ſpoken of *Life* and Immortality, adds, *Now he that hath wrought us for the ſelf ſame thing is God, who hath alſo given unto us the earneſt of the Spirit*: By Converting Grace we are wrought upon for Glory; and the Spirit who works in us a new Life which is Spiritual, is an earneſt to aſſure us of Life Eternal: Oh Heavenly *Jeruſalem*! a City that has foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God! where Glory is everlaſting, Bleſſedneſs perfect, and Joy is full, without poſſibility of abatement! into thee none but Converts *ſhall have*, or are *fit to have* admiſſion!

10. The *Threatnings which the Word denounces againſt the Unconverted*, prove the *Neceſſity*

Neceſſity of Converſion. The only *Saviour* aſſerts with vehemency, and that again and again, aſſuring *all*, that there is *no Salvation* for the Impenitent, *Luk.* 13. 3, 5. *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* If Souls are Unconverted, Sin is certainly Unpardon'd, and unpardon'd Sin binds over to eternal Death: We are commanded to *Repent and be Converted, that our Sins may be blotted out*, Act. 3. 19. Thoſe who refuſe to be Converted, all their Sins are written down in the book of Gods Remembrance, not one blotted out or forgotten, which book will be open'd at the laſt day, to their Confuſion and Condemnation. What heavy loads are *Guilt* and *Wrath!* both theſe abide upon the Unconverted.

How *ſoon* may the Wrath of God, which is both threatned and juſtly merited, ſeize upon the Unconverted! how *ſuddainly* may it deſtroy them beyond all poſſibility of remedy! *Pſal.* 7. 11, 12. *God is angry with the wicked every day*; and as he grows more wicked, God becomes more angry: *If he* turn not, *he hath whet his Sword, he hath bent his bow and made it ready:* To ſignifie the *Patience* of God, and his *unwillingneſs to deſtroy*, the *ſlaughtering Weapons* are repreſented as lying by him *unprepared*, his

Sword is not whetted, his *Bow is unbent*; but if Sinners *refuſe* to *turn*, the Sword, the Bow may quickly be made ready, and God may come to that peremptory reſolution, *Iſa.* 1. 24. *Ah! I will eaſe me of mine adverſaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.*

Turning you ſee is in the higheſt degree neceſſary, for you muſt *turn* or *dye*: If a City were on fire, and there were but *one Gate* at which there might be an egreſs, to fly from the fury of the flames, Oh! what flocking would there be to *that Gate!* If Sinners had but any *ſenſe and knowledge*, they would turn to God by *thouſands and by millions*, ſince *Converſion* is the *only Door* through which they may eſcape the Vengeance of eternal Fire: Thoſe obſtinate Wretches that *will not turn* in time, God will make them *burn* in Hell for evermore.

Thus have I at large demonſtrated the *Neceſſity* of Converſion: But alas! *VVho believes our report!* who credits that which is of all the greateſt certainty! Neceſſity in *other* matters has a *mighty force*, but the *Neceſſity of Converſion* prevails with *very few*. I make a needful *Apoſtrophe* from *Man* to *God* himſelf.

Lord! Reveal and make bare thine own arm,

arm, and cause the most stubborn and stout-hearted to yield to thee; for Arguments alone will never prevail with the dead in Sin, to turn and live to God.

In the fifth place, I am to *Answer the Arguments which the carnal Minds of men object against Conversion:* These λογισμοὶ are ὀχυρώματα; these *fleshly reasonings* are *strong holds* which must be *cast down*, 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5. And I would not leave one of them undemolished. *Removere prohibens*, to remove the hindrance of Conversion, is very much conducing to the thing it self; therefore I shall (which is but needful) be the larger, in producing the *strongest Reasons* and most *forcible Pleas* that are brought and used against *Sinners turning to God*; and give a *full* Answer, shewing the *miserable invalidity and weakness* of them *all.*

Obj. 1. The first Objection against Conversion is this; *We are Members of the Christian Church already.* We have been *Baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:* If indeed we were Heathens or Infidels, 'twere proper to call us to turn to the true God, and to embrace the Faith of Christ; but since we are already Baptized into the Church, which is

his Body, the *Call and Invitation to turn* ſeems not to be *made to us.*

Anſw. 1. It is one thing to be a Member of the *viſible Church*, and another thing to be *really* a *Member of Chriſt*: The Apoſtle ſayes, *All are not Iſrael who are of Iſrael*, Rom. 9. 6. Many have a Form of Godlineſs without the Power. In the ſame Vine there are many fruitleſs as well as fruitful Branches: In the ſame Church viſible, many unſound Profeſſors, if not more in number than ſincere Believers: Now becauſe theſe Saints in *ſhew only*, ſeem to be near to God, but their Hearts are really *removed far from him*, they have need to return to him as well as the openly Prophane.

2. Baptiſm and Converſion are *ſeparable*. *Simon Magus* was under a Conviction by the Miracles which were wrought for the Confirmation of the Goſpel, that it was *from Heaven*; and he was Baptized by *Philip*, who did his Duty in adminiſtring that Ordinance to him; yet afterwards *Simon Peter* tells him plainly, that his *Heart was not right with God, but he was in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity*, Act. 8. 21, 23.

3. The *Jews* of old *were of the Church of God*, and yet how often are they *Called to turn?*

turn? Will Church-members, without Converſion be the better for their Church-memberſhip? Oh no. Sin in them is more inexcuſable, they add treachery and perfidiouſneſs to their iniquity; and hereby their *Provocation is*, and their *puniſhment will be* the more increaſed, *Amos* 3. 2. *You onely have I known of all the Families of the Earth, therefore will I puniſh you for all your iniquities.* Your Sins by my Favour and your Priviledges are aggravated; therefore your Condemnation without Converſion will be much the ſorer.

4. Your Baptiſm is ſo far from *proving Converſion needleſs*, that it *ſtrengthens your obligation* to turn to God: And indeed as *Circumciſion* of old, which was a *Seal of the ſame Covenant*; it may be improved this way. Under the Old Teſtament, every *Iſraelite* that in *Infancy* had been *circumciſed in the fleſh*, might go unto God for *Converting Grace*, for a *circumciſed Heart*, and go to him as unto a God who had *ſealed a Covenant* to him. *Ephraim* upon this ſcore calls the Lord *his* God; when he cries to him to be turned, *Jer.* 31. 18. *Turn thou me and I ſhall be turned, for thou art the Lord* my *God*; as if he ſhould ſay, *Lord! I have been circumciſed, and dedicated unto Thee, and laid under an obligation*

tion to be Thine: Oh circumciſe and turn my Heart, that I may be Thine *indeed.*

Do the Children of Believers under the Goſpel, want ſuch an help to Converſion, as the *Jewiſh* Children under the Law had? Did Chriſt come to turn Infants out of Covenant who were once taken in, and to leſſen the Saints Priviledgs inſtead of enlarging and augmenting them? No, no. He that has been baptized, and received this Seal of the New Teſtament; may with confidence addreſs unto God, and ſay, *Lord! I have been baptized with* Water, *Oh! ſprinckle me with the* Blood of Jeſus, *baptize me with* his Spirit, *waſh me thorowly from my iniquity, cleanſe and turn my Heart to Thee, and make me faithful and ſtedfaſt in thy Covenant.*

Obj. 2. The ſecond Objection againſt Converſion is this, *We are not as other men are, and have no need to turn.* Our lives have been unſpotted, none can charge us with Extortion, with Injuſtice or Adultery; who can accuſe us of a fault that we ſhould concern our ſelves to mend? Had we indeed been groſs offenders, Converſion and Reformation would have been our Duty: But the Letter of Gods commands we have obſerved, and refuſed to be vicious, like others, from our youth upwards. *Anſ.*

Anſ. 1. An *unblameable Converſation I would not let paſs without the Commendation that's due to it.* 'Tis well that many who are Strangers to God, are under ſome reſtraint, by Education, Laws, Shame, natural Conſcience, elſe the World might quickly be too hot for any that are born of God to live in it. The young Man in the Goſpel, who was ſo exact in his Morals, 'tis ſaid our Lord *loved him*, Mar. 10. 21. though he himſelf loved *his Poſſeſſions* before a Saviour, and a *Treaſure in Heaven*. (a) Chriſt did not love him as he *loved his Church*; but had a reſpect to his external vertues, as thoſe things which tend very much to the Conſervation of Mankind; and to the Benefit and better order of the Univerſe.

(a) *Politicas virtutes Chriſtus amare dicitur, quia illi grata eſt humani generis conſervatio; non quod ſalutis vel gratiæ, meritoriæ ſint. ſed quia ad finem ſpectant illi probatum.* Calvin.

2. Admit you are free from groſſer crimes, yet *which way are your Hearts inclined?* What beſt ſuits them? What do they love and prize moſt? Though your Pleaſures are in themſelves lawful; though your Eſtates are not gotten by deceit and unrighteouſneſs; yet if theſe are loved and valued more than God, and Chriſt, and Heaven; you are guilty of *Idolatry*. 'Tis reaſon you ſhould repent and return, for your

your Hearts are departed from God, and are ſettled upon the Creatures: You are they who have committed the *two great evils*, at which the very *Heavens may be aſtoniſhed, and horribly afraid*; you have *forſaken the Fountain of living Waters, and hewen out unto your ſelves, Ciſterns, broken Ciſterns, that can hold no Water*, Jer. 2. 12, 13.

3. You that are not of vicious Lives, *Have you ſtudied the Corruption of your Natures?* Chriſt tells you, that, *that which is born of the Fleſh is Fleſh*, Joh. 3. 6. And *Fleſh* being here oppoſed unto *Spirit*, till you are converted and born again, your Natures are carnal and full of enmity againſt God. Oh ſee the ſinfulneſs of humane Nature! how backward are you to think, or ſpeak, or hear of God! how void of Love to him, Fear of him, and Delight in him! The Fountain of evil in the Nature of man, is ſo inexhauſtible, that if man ſhould live here for ever, this Fountain would *caſt forth* wickedneſs *for ever*; and thus *'twill* do in *Hell*, and therefore everlaſting puniſhments *there*, are juſt and righteous.

4. You that have been juſt to men, giving them their due, how have you *omitted your Duty towards God*, and your duty towards the

he *Souls of others, as well as your own?* And uppoſe, that you have prayed and heard he Word, and gone in a Road and Round f holy Duties; yet your unbewailed, nay llowed deadneſs, diſtractions, and forma- ity in theſe duties, makes them very of- enſive to God, and the more offenſive, be- auſe though ſuch ſorry duties, yet they re reſted on as Saviours to keep you out f Hell, to bring you ſafe to Heaven.

5. This *wholeneſs in your own conceit, eeps you off from Chriſt the Phyſician*, Mat. 9. 12. While you think you need not Converting Grace, you remain unconvert- ed; and the Miſeries and Curſes of the Unconverted are upon you. Confidence n your ſelves makes your Caſe worſe in ome reſpects than that of the *Publicans nd Harlots*, who *entred into the Kingdom of Heaven before the ſelf-juſtifying Scribes and Phariſees.*

Obj. 3. In the third place, ſome do ar- gue thus againſt Converſion. *We are too young, and 'tis too ſoon to turn to God.* Se- rious thoughts about our Souls, muſt not e expected in ſuch *Green heads* as ours. Our *Glaſs* has but *juſt begun to run*, we have time enough before us; therefore we hope we may be allowed to act as others f the ſame age with us, and enjoy our

Sports

Sports and Pleasures, and fulfil our youthful Lusts and Desires; when *Age comes on*, then 'twill be time enough to turn to God, and make Provision for Eternity.

Ans. 1. Early Conversion is *very acceptable*. 'Tis the Duty of them that are young to *remember their Creatour in the dayes of their Youth*, Eccles. 12. 1. And God is very much pleased when he is *thus* remembred. A mark of Honour is put upon them that have been Converted betimes; *Joseph*, *Josiah*, *Timothy*, and others, are upon sacred Record; because when very young and tender, they did fly from sin, turn'd to God, and fear'd him; and by his Word became wise unto Salvation.

2. Early Conversion is *more easie*. I grant, Nature in the Young, as well as Old, is utterly averse from it; but yet 'tis certain that long continuance and custom in Sin does make it harder to be forsaken. Therefore sayes the Prophet, *Jer.* 13. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or a Leopard his Spots? then may ye do good, that are accustomed to do evil.* Evil Custom is a second evil Nature, and doubles the Cords, which hold, and hinder the Sinner from Conversion. They that turn while young, have not such *habits of sin* to grapple with, neither are *evils so root-*

ed in them, as in those that are Older.

3. Early Conversion *prevents a great deal of Sin, which impetuous Youth is apt to be defiled with.* When the Psalmist saies, *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way,* Psal. 119. 9. he plainly intimates that the *way of the young man,* is naturally *unclean,* and Nature being vigorous in him, his Pollutions and Defilements exceedingly grow upon him. But if he *turn to God,* and *take heed to himself* according to the Words Direction and Command, his *Heart* shall be made and kept *pure,* his *Vessel shall be possessed in Sanctification and Honour*; and though Youth be a dangerous Age, the Grace of God shall be sufficient for preservation.

4. You that are born of Christian Parents, *God has challenged a special interest in you, from your very Infancy.* (a) The Children of them that are *Infidels* are expresly said to *be unclean:* but if the Parents, or, but *one* of them does believe; the *Children* are affirmed *to be holy,* 1 Cor. 7. 14. You are Holy to the Lord, your faithful Parents as they *gave themselves,* so they gave *you their Seed* unto their Lord,

(a) *The Scripture makes a difference between the Children of Christian Parents, and the Children of Infidels; and therefore that opinion which makes no difference between them must needs be an errour, and contrary to the Scripture.*

to

to be peculiarly for his Use and Service. *Circumcision of Infants* under the Law, and *baptizing* them under the Gospel, shews that obligations to Conversion are early, and that the thing it self can never be too soon.

5. You that are young, and talk of having time enough; *remember, that young ones may dye, and often do; and after death they are brought to judgment*, Eccles. 11. 9. *b* And if you dye before Converted, you will dye in your Sins, and the first death and second death will come together. O young man, consider, that *Childhood and youth are vanity*; the Thoughts and Counsels then, are usually foolish and unreasonable. Life is not to be reckoned upon; for mans *Life is but a Vapour*; and *Thine* may be as a *morning Cloud, and as the early dew*, vanishing very quickly: Therefore hasten thy flight from youthful lusts, and turn to God without any further delay.

b Since seats of Youth must be brought into judgement, what manner of persons ought young men to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness.

Obj. 4. Others do further Object, That if once they are Converted, they *must bid an eternal farewell to all Delight and Pleasure*, and live a melancholick Life; their *eyes* must alwaies be *full of Tears*, and their *breathing*

breathing must be a *continual ſighing*; they must ever be complaining of their Hearts, and lamenting the miſcarriages of their Lives, and unto *Joy* they muſt become *perfect Strangers*: And by ſuch ſad apprehenſions as theſe, Satan fills the Hearts of thouſands with a mighty Prejudice againſt Converſion. But to this Objection I thus Anſwer.

Anſ. 1. Converſion only *baniſhes the Pleaſures that are ſinful*; and to take Pleaſure in Sin, how unreaſonable is it? ſhould it be counted a Pleaſure to anger the Almighty? to lay our ſelves under a Curſe which none can bear, without being extreamly wretched? ſhould it be counted a Pleaſure to expoſe our ſelves to all ſorts of Judgments and Calamities in this life? to wound the Conſcience, to damn the Soul for ever? Is there any eaſe in Hell? are thoſe Burnings become deſirable? and ſhould Pleaſure be taken in Sin, which if ſtill delighted in, will certainly bring us to thoſe Torments? Lovers of ſinful Pleaſures underſtand not Pleaſures: All theſe kind of Delights are to be ſhunn'd, for they have as it were an intoxicating and ſtupifying Poyſon in the mouth, and a mortal Sting in the tail of them.

2. Converſion *ſpiritualizes and hightens the Pleaſures that are innocent and lawful*: He

that keeps within the bounds that God has set him, consults his own Peace. When *God* is *eyed* and *served in the abundance of all things*, there is the greater *Joy* in that abundance, as is intimated, *Deut.* 28. 47. When the Creatures are improved for God, this is one way towards the *Cure* of that *Vanity and Vexation* that Sinners find in them: To Eat, and Drink, and Recreate our selves to the Glory of God, designing by these actions to be fitter for our Lords work and use, this puts a very great sweetness into both our Food and Recreations; and this sweetness the greatest Epicures and Sensualists taste not of.

3. That *Godly Sorrow which is so much cryed out against, is not without a satisfaction:* Did ever any one that truly repented, repent of his Repentance? Impenitency will be found a most destructive Madness, and will be repented of in Hell at farthest; but Repentance never, not in this World, less at Death, and least of all in Heaven. 2 *Cor.* 7. 10. *Godly sorrow worketh* μετάνοιαν ἀμεταμέλητον, *Repentance unto Salvation not to be repented of:* As God is pleased *with the Sacrifice of a broken and contrite Spirit*, so the Heart that is broken may be *glad* of this *Contrition*, which is the *work of a Comforter*, and to find how God has change[d] th[e]

the heart of ſtone into an heart of fleſh.

4. 'Tis the greateſt miſtake in the World, to think that *turning to God*, is nothing elſe but *turning ſorrowful:* Care is taken that the groſſeſt Offenders if truly Penitent, *ſhould not be ſwallowed up of over much ſorrow*, 2 Cor. 2. 7. The *Mourners* are pronounced bleſſed, for they ſhall *be Comforted:* They that *ſow in Tears ſhall reap in Joy:* The *Kingdom of God is Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*, as well as *Righteouſneſs*, *Rom.* 14. 17. and this Peace *paſſes all underſtanding*, this Joy is *unſpeakable and full of glory:* How large and laſting is the Foundation that the Converts Joy is built upon! he *rejoyces in Chriſt Jeſus* as a *Saviour to the uttermoſt*; he rejoyces in God as the *beſt* of *Fathers*, as a *Portion for ever*; he rejoyces, becauſe *his Name is written in the Book of Life*, and ſhall never be blotted out; he rejoyces, becauſe he ſhall *want no good thing* in this World, and the *evils* that are his exerciſe *ſhall work together for his good*; he rejoyces finally, becauſe in the next World his *Joy will be full*, and without any mixture of Grief, or any reaſon for Trouble, in *Gods glorious Preſence*; and his Pleaſures will not be like thoſe of ſin, *only for a ſeaſon, but will laſt for evermore*, *Pſal.* 16. *ult.* Converſion then will not rob

you of Delight, but make it truer, greater, and better grounded; whereas the Pleaſures of the Unconverted are but meer Deluſions, Dreams, and are chaſed away like Night-viſions.

Obj. 5. In the fifth place, there be that argue thus againſt Converſion: If we turn to God, *we ſhall be expoſed to Contempt and Reproach:* How many Mouths will be open'd againſt us? how many Tongues will ſpeak evil of us? we ſhall perfectly be made the meer foot-balls of diſdain, if we become indeed religious.

Anſ. 1. A *wiſe Man* ſhould not be concern'd at the *diſeſteem* of *Fools and Mad men*; ſo wicked men are called, and ſuch and no better indeed they are. If all the poor Lunaticks in *Bedlam* ſhould deride you becauſe of your ſober Carriage, you would not mind them, unleſs it were to pity them, becauſe you would know your ſelves to be *in your Wits*, and them to be *out of theirs.* When wicked ones do make a *mock of Sin*, 'tis a ſign that they are in a ſpiritual ſenſe *delirious*, and when they prate againſt Religion, this is really their *frantick raving.*

2. To be *Reproached, is better than to be Commended of the World:* You would be none of the beſt your ſelves, if you had the

the good word of all that are bad: Christ himself sayes, *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you*, Luk. 6. 26. Reproach for Religion and Righteousness sake, is a far greater Honour than the esteem of all the Men of the World. The Apostle *Paul* was so far from being discouraged, that he *took Pleasure in Reproaches*, 2 Cor. 12. 10. And *Moses* before him, had *esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*, Heb. 11. 26.

3. Better, Men reproach thee for thy Conversion, *than Conscience reproach thee for thy Obstinacy*: The reproaches of an awakened, a wounded Conscience, will be very terrible, not to be denied, not to be answered, not to be endured: As long as *Job*'s *Heart did not reproach him*, but witnessed his Integrity, *Job* 27. 5, 6. he could bear his unfriendly Friends Censures and Reproaches the better.

4. Whatever the World judges, *Conversion is exceedingly for the honour of all that are Converted*. All Unconverted ones are really vile and abominable, slaves to their lusts, the unclean Spirits drudges; they are most basely employed, because employed in works that are evil. But the Convert has a real excellency, he partakes of a new, of a divine Nature, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. How

highly is he advanced, who is promoted to be a *Child*, an *Heir of God*, a *Joint-heir with Chriſt!* Prieſtly, nay, *Kingly* dignity is put upon him, *Rev.* 1. 6. Oh mind not the ſcoffs and ſcorn of the fooliſh. To have God to be your Father, Chriſt your Brother, the Holy Angels miniſtring Spirits to you, to be enriched with Grace, and at laſt Crown'd with Glory, cannot juſtly be look'd upon as a matter of diſgrace to any.

Obj. 6. There be ſome that further Object againſt Converſion: This is a thing *may coſt us very dear*, we may come hereby to ſuffer the loſs of Liberty, Eſtate and Life; how many *Thouſands* of *Martyrs* have there been, ſince there was a Church gather'd out of the World, and Converted to God through Chriſt Jeſus? Death came to theſe *before the time*, and came *with Violence*, and the *Torments* they endured, made them ſuffer *many Deaths in one*: 'Tis terrible to be *ſtoned*, *ſawn aſunder*, *ſlain with the Sword*, burnt to aſhes at a ſtake; or if it come not to this, 'tis ſad enough *to wander about in ſheep-skins and goat-skins, being deſtitute and afflicted*, and forced *to dwell in Dens and Caves of the earth*: Flames, Swords, Racks, Gibbets, are none of the moſt taking things to perſwade unto Converſion.

Unto

Unto this affrighting Objection, I thus Anſwer.

Anſ. 1. Though all ſhould *count the Coſt* of being Converts, and reckon upon the Croſs, yet all are not put upon *bearing the heavieſt part of it*; though many have ſail'd through a *very tempeſtuous Ocean* to Heaven, yet many have alſo through a *calmer Sea* arrived ſafe thither. The Church of Chriſt has its lucid Intervals, and for many years in ſome places there is not the *fiery Tryal*: The God whom they ſerve, *takes away the righteous* very frequently *from the evil to come*, Iſa. 57. 1, 2. and they are *ſafe at reſt above*, before the *ſtorm here below riſes*.

2. There is a Promiſe made to Converts, of *ſo much of this World* as God ſees to be *good for them*; and he is beſt able to judge what is indeed convenient: So that Godlineſs is really a gainful thing, and has the Promiſe *of the Life that now is, as well as of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. While the Lord ſees it expedient, his Saints ſhould keep their temporal enjoyments, that fence his Providence has ſet about them, will ſecure them from the ſons of violence, *Heb.* 13. 5, 6. *Let your Converſation be without Covetouſneſs, and be content with ſuch things as ye have; for He hath*

ſaid, I will never leave thee nor forſake thee: So that we may boldly ſay, the Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do to me.

3. All *loſſes for Religion are ſanctified*, and the Soul gains ſo much Grace and Peace when temporal goods are taken away, that in point of *value*, the Sufferer receives in *this life an hundred-fold*, Mar. 10. 30. He that receives a Wedge of maſſy Gold from the hand that took away a few Farthings, has he reaſon to complain of being a looſer? leſs reaſon has he to cry out of loſs, who has *leſs* of *the World*, but *much more Grace* and *ſpiritual Joy* than ever.

4. If Converts are called to *Martyrdom and extraordinary Trials*, *extraordinary Strength* ſhall be vouchſafed; for *God is faithful, who will not ſuffer* any of his *to be tempted above what they are able*, 1 Cor. 10. 13. The greater the Saints ſufferings are, the greater honour is put upon them, and the greater is their ſupport and comfort: Abundant Sufferings, and abundant Conſolation to ſweeten them, go together, 2 *Cor.* 1. 5. *For as the Sufferings of Chriſt abound in us, ſo our Conſolation alſo aboundeth by Chriſt.* 'Tis ill indeed to *ſuffer as an evil doer*, or as a *buſie body* in that which it does not *concern us to be doing*; but to ſuffer as a Chriſtian,

ſtian, as a Convert, is an happy thing, and ſhould be rejoyced in; becauſe the *Spirit of Glory and of God, does reſt upon* thoſe that thus bear the Croſs of Chriſt, 1 *Pet.* 4. 13, 14. He gives them *boldneſs* in Confeſſing the Truth, a Mouth and Wiſdom to ſilence thoſe that gainſay it, and Faith, Fortitude and Patience, to bear the uttermoſt of their Force and Fury. A *fiery Furnace*, though *ſeven times heated*, is not to be dreaded, if the *Son of God* be there with us.

5. None that come to Heaven repent of having *parted* with *any thing*, that ſtood in *competition* with it. The Apoſtle while *here* called Afflictions *light*, but how did he look on them, when they were all paſt, and the *weight of Glory* was actually received? All Heads are Crowned in Heaven, and all Crowns are bright; all Veſſels of glory are ſo full, that there is not room for the leaſt envy, yet there ſeems to be a ſpecial note of Honour ſet upon Sufferers; the Scripture repreſents them as pointed at, for their Faithfulneſs and for their Reward, *Rev.* 7. 14. *Theſe are they that came out of great tribulation, and have waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

Obj. 7. A ſeventh Objection againſt Converſion

verſion runs thus, We ſee *very few that are perſwaded to turn to God*; the generality of thoſe whom we live among remain Unconverted, and why ſhould *we* be *ſingular?*

Anſ. 1. The *general bad Example* that is given, is a *great miſchief* to the World, whereby wicked men do harden one another. A few indeed there be that are choſen out of the World, and who do ſeek and chuſe a better World, but the generality are worldly minded; the *ſhrodeſt Heads*, the *greateſt Wits*, the *deepeſt Politicians* mind Earth and neglect Heaven, and refuſe to be Converted that they may come thither; and multitudes going in pernicious wayes, they are walked in with the *greater ſecurity*, yet they are not at all the *leſs* deſtructive.

2. Is it any harm to be *ſingular in what is excellent?* To be ſingular in good Nature, to be ſingular in Parts, to be ſingular in Learning, is not matter of reflection, and why ſhould it be accounted diſgraceful to be ſingular in Grace and Holineſs? He that ſayes, *Mat.* 7. 14. *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to Life, and few there be that find it*; intimates plainly, that his followers muſt not herd with the multitude, and that thoſe muſt

muſt be ſingular, who will go in the ſafeſt and moſt excellent way.

3. Is it any harm in a time of Peſtilence, to be of the *Number of thoſe few that eſcape the Contagion?* Sin is the worſt ſort of Plague, and moſt in the World dye of it, and dye the Death that is Eternal: Oh what madneſs is it to refuſe to be Converted and healed, and to reſolve to dye and to be damn'd for Company?

4. Multitudes in Hell will be *no eaſe or relief to one another.* They that have been drawn to Sin, by others; with what eyes will they behold them in torments, curſing the Counſel and Example they gave them; and eſpecially their own madneſs in imitating ſuch pernicious Patterns! And the perſwaders to Sin, will have their miſery increaſed, becauſe they have occaſioned others eternal miſery. 'Tis very probable that the Rich man, *Luk.* 16. was afraid of having his *own torment* increaſed by his *Brethrens company*, unto whom perhaps he had been exemplary in Profaneneſs and Senſuality; therefore he wiſh'd them a Meſſenger *from the Dead*, to perſwade them to *Repentance.*

Obj. 8. In the eighth place, another Objection is this. *We have no ſtrength, no ability to turn to God.* If we were endu-

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ed with a Power to Convert our ſelves, and to make our own Hearts new; 'twere reaſonable to perſwade us to exert and put that Power forth. But man ſince the fall is *without ſtrength*, and therefore in urging us to Converſion, you urge us to that which is impoſſible *by us* to be performed.

Anſ. 1. I grant mans *inability* to *make himſelf* a *ſincere Convert*; to turn, is a Sinners Duty, but from hence it does not follow that he has ability of himſelf to do it. A man that *owes* ten thouſand Talents, does not *ceaſe* to be a *Debtour*, becauſe he *has never a Farthing* to pay. To help to anſwer this Objection, we muſt not introduce, the *Pelagian*, or *Semipelagian* Errour.

2. Are you *glad that you are unable to turn to God?* do you rejoice that you have ſuch an *excuſe* for your *lazineſs* and *perverſneſs?* If ſo, it ſhews the *naughtineſs* of your Hearts. And your Conſcience muſt needs yield, that your *Plea* of *Impotence*, is a very weak one. If a *Servant* that by a *fall* were made a *Cripple*, were *glad* that hereby he is *diſabled* from ſerving his Maſter, his Maſter would be juſt in puniſhing him, for not doing what he can't do, becauſe he has ſuch a naughty mind,

that

that he is glad he can't do it.

3. If you are *ſenſible of your inability to turn to God, and ſorry becauſe unable, and deſirous to have ability to turn indeed*; your Condition is really very *hopeful*. Obſtinate Sinners had rather be *without* ſtrength to turn to God, than *have* it; in vain therefore do they plead want of *Power*, when *Will* is ſo much wanting. But if you are *ſenſible* you have *no might*, and deſire Power from above, God is ready to ſtrengthen you by his Spirit, to that, unto which Nature is unable. He is willing to *give his Spirit* unto any that ſeriouſly *aſk him*, Luk. 11. 13. *He gives Power to the faint, and to them that have no might*, and are ſenſible they have none; *he increaſes ſtrength*, Iſa. 40. 29. Make uſe of and attend upon the appointed means and ordinances of Grace, wherein this Strength is conveyed. *Fury is not in God*, when once Sinners begin to *yield*: Lay *hold upon his Strength* that you may turn in Truth, and *make peace with him, and you ſhall make peace with him*, Iſa. 27. 5.

Obj. 9. A ninth Objection is this, Though we do not turn to God at preſent, yet we are not *abſolutely againſt the thing*; *hereafter* we intend to do it. This is both an *excuſe* for not turning, and an *argument againſt*

againſt the preſent doing it; becauſe 'tis time enough, as they ſay, hereafter.

Anſ. 1. Delay to turn to God, is bottom'd upon *very great miſtakes*, as if Sinners could *turn when they would*, or could *command the Grace* of God at *Pleaſure to aſſiſt them*, or were ſure of the continuance of *Life*, and the *ſeaſon of Salvation*.

2. Delay *provokes* the *Lord* exceedingly, and very much *grieves* his *Holy Spirit*, if a Maſter commands a Servant to do his work; and he replyes he will do it *ſeven year hence*, this is juſtly look't upon as diſobedience and mockery joyn'd together. How would a Maſter on Earth take ſuch an Anſwer? Surely it muſt needs anger the God of Heaven, who bids you turn to day; to ſay that ſeven, and ſeven, and ſeven years after that, will be time enough to do it. The Spirit urges to *preſent* Converſion; delay vexes the Holy Ghoſt, and being vexed he may give *over ſtriving*, *Gen. 6. 3. My Spirit ſhall not alwaies ſtrive with man.* And if he be quite gone, Converſion becomes impoſſible, you never, never can, or will be turned.

3. Delay *hardens the unconverted.* Satans holds are ſtronger, Sin is rooted deeper; Conſcience is more ſtupified; Cuſtom in Sin, more fully takes away the Senſe of it.

it. And ſurely the more dead aſleep the Conſcience is, the more unlikely 'tis to be awakened; the more the Heart is like an Adamant ſtone, the more improbable 'tis that ever it ſhould be mollified.

4. Delayes are *unconceivably dangerous*; 'tis far greater folly to defer thy turning to God, than if thou ſhouldſt defer the cutting off a Grangren'd member, or than if thy houſe were on fire, and thou ſhouldſt ſay, *A twelve month, or ſeven year hence were time enough to put out the flame.* *Martial* has an excellent *Epigram* againſt delaying the amendment of the Life, *lib.* 5. *Epig.* 58.

Cras te victurum, cras dicis Poſthume ſemper;
Dic mihi cras iſtud Poſthume quando venit?
Quam longe eſt cras iſtud? ubi eſt? aut unde petendum?
Nunquid apud Parthos, Armenioſque latet?
Jam cras iſtud habet Priami vel Neſtoris annos.
Cras iſtud quanti, dic mihi poſſit emi?
Cras vives: hodie jam vivere Poſthume ſerum eſt?
Ille ſapit quiſquis Poſthume vixit heri.

The deſign of the *Poet* is to ſhew that purpoſes of *future* amendment are *idle and vain*, that to amend preſently is *late enough*, and that it would have been *true Wiſdom* to have done it *long ago*.

Obj.

Obj. 10. The laſt Objection againſt Converſion, is that of *Deſpairing Sinners.* Oh! ſay they, we *are afraid, 'tis quite too late to turn to God.* He has *called long*, but we have as *long refuſed*; he has *ſtretched forth his hand*, but we have ſtill been *ſtiff-necked and gainſaying.* If we had turned *ſooner* we might have *hoped*, but now our Sins are ſo increaſed over our heads, and we have perſiſted ſo long in our rebellion, that we quite deſpair of Pardon and Reception.

Anſ. 1. God calls *thoſe to turn*, who *ſinn'd long*, and with *an high hand*, nay with their *whole might*, Jer. 3. 5, 7. *Behold thou haſt ſpoken and done evil things as thou* couldeſt: *And I ſaid* after *ſhe had done all theſe things, Turn thou unto me.* Thoſe that have ſliden back with a perpetual backſliding, are invited to return to God from whom they have deeply revolted; ſuch a call you have, *Jer.* 3. 22. and the call is hearkned to and obeyed, *Return ye backſliding Children, and I will heal your backſlidings; behold, we come to thee, for thou art the Lord our God.*

2. Some have been *Converted very late.* Grace has recover'd them that have been *very far gone* in Sin, and by Sin have been brought to the very brink of the bottom-

leſs

leſs pit. Some have been Converted, not only at the *ninth* hour, but at the *eleventh* hour, nay at the *laſt moment* of the *twelfth* hour of the day. To prevent deſpair, we have one inſtance of a Man, that began to live when he was juſt dying; and that was the Penitent *Thief* upon the Croſs, his Soul was *joyn'd to Jeſus* by a true Faith, juſt before 'twas *ſeparated from his Body*; his Heart was changed not many moments before his great change. But do we find any more ſuch inſtances in Scripture? No. *One* we find to prevent Deſpair, *but one* to check Preſumption and fooliſh Procraſtination.

That Thief upon the Croſs ſeems, though juſt before ſo great a Sinner, of a ſudden to be made the *greateſt Believer* upon Earth. *(a)* As *Calvin* obſerves concerning him, he did *altius penetrare*, pierce deeper into the *myſtery of Chriſt Crucified*, than at that preſent *all the Apoſtles did*; they were all offended, at the Croſs; but this poor Penitent places his *Confidence* in *that*, which was their *ſcandal*; and he ſees *Life* and *Salvation* in Chriſt,

(a) Hic Latronum & memorabile fidei exemplum altius penetrat quam Apoſtoli omnes; Chriſtum in patibulo Regem adorat, Regnum ejus celebrat in horrendâ, & pluſquam deformi abjectione, moribundum pronunciat vitæ Authorem. Calvin. ad Luc. 23 43.

when *Chriſt* and *himſelf* were both *dying*.

3. Though you that have deferr'd Converſion long, ought *bitterly to bewail* your former obſtinacy; yet *add not the Sin of deſpair to all the reſt*. A great many years ſpent in wickedneſs, ſhould be reflected on with ſerious ſorrow, and ſelf-condemning: Yet ſay not, *there is no hope*; for this will neither better *your Eſtate*, nor *you*. Deſpair is a greater ſin than moſt are aware of, reflecting much diſhonour upon the *Grace and Mercy* of God, which 'tis his ſpecial deſign to *glorifie* in the Goſpel, *Eph.* 1. 6. Deſpair is a diſparaging of, and a Sinning againſt our Lord Jeſus, who *came into the World to ſave Sinners*, and the *very Chief* of Sinners, 1 *Tim.* 1. 15. and how contrary is this deſpair unto the *holy Spirit* the *Comforter!*

And as deſpair is *evil* in its *own Nature*, and very unreaſonable, ſo 'tis evil in its tendency, it either tends to *ſelf-murther*; Hope was firſt kill'd in *Judas*, and then *Judas* kills himſelf; *Mat.* 27. 4, 5. or elſe it iſſues in *profaneneſs*: when Sinners conclude their Caſe is deſperate, and that they ſhall certainly be damn'd at laſt, 'tis not unuſual for them to reſolve, to enjoy all the Pleaſures and gain of Sin while they may, and to endeavour to expell

their

their ſad and ſelf-tormenting Thoughts, by ſenſuality and earthly-mindedneſs, *Jer.* 2. 25. *Judah* firſt ſayes, *There is no hope*, and then reſolves upon a continuance, and greater eagerneſs in an evil way: *I have loved ſtrangers and after them will I go.* But pray miſtake not the Nature of Deſpair: You muſt deſpair of *Saving your ſelves* by your own Worth and Power, you muſt deſpair of *ever obtaining Mercy* if reſolved *ſtill to go on in your treſpaſſes*: But,

4. If now at laſt you are but *truly willing to turn*, to turn to God; to turn from *all Sin*, and to turn with *all your Heart*; God is much more willing to *turn you*, to *turn to you*, and to ſhew you *Mercy*. None ever turn'd and was rejected, none ever truly deſired Grace to turn and went to Hell without it, and periſht unconverted. When *Ephraim* cryed, *Turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned*; God *ſurely heard him*, Jer. 31. 18. and *v.* 20. he ſayes, *My Bowels are troubled for him, and I will ſurely have mercy upon him.*

Thus I have *anſwered* the *Objections* againſt Converſion. I have endeavour'd to level *the Mountains and Hills*, to *fill the Valleys*, to make the *Crooked ſtraight*, and the *Rough wayes ſmooth* and plain; *that all Fleſh may ſee the Salvation of God*,

Luk. 3. 5, 6. And that, *Converſion to him*, is *required of all* that will partake of his Salvation.

VI In the laſt place, I come to the *Application.*

USE I. If Converſion be thus neceſſary, and the great thing which God requires; learn from hence the *great danger, that there is, in being miſtaken about Converſion.* To miſtake counterfeit Coyn for good and lawful Money, to purchaſe an Eſtate upon a falſe Title inſtead of a ſound, and true one; to place Confidence in one that ſeems a Friend, but is really faithleſs, and an Enemy; all ſuch miſtakes are accounted dangerous and hurtful. But no miſtakes in Point of Prejudice and Miſchievouſneſs, are comparable to *this*; when that which is *not Grace* is taken to *be the Grace of God in Truth.* It is an Obſervation, that *Fraus oritur ex ſimilitudine.* Deceit ariſes from likeneſs: There are many things that have ſome kind of *likeneſs to Converſion*, that *indeed are not* Converſion; theſe I am with all faithfulneſs to diſcover to you, and you with all care are to heed the diſcovery; for if you ſhould deceive your own ſelves, and *miſtake about Converting Grace*, you would be

be for ever *fruſtrated in your hopes of Glory:* And can there be a greater diſappointment, than confidently to expect Heaven, and find your ſelves not only excluded, but Sentenc'd and ſent to that place of Woe, where there is the *greateſt loſs*, and that loſs *irreparable*; where there is the *greateſt Pain and Torment*, without any *hope of eaſe or end:* The things that are miſtaken for Converſion are theſe.

1. The *turning to a Party and Opinion*, there may be this, where there is no turning unto God. An Orthodox Judgment there may be where there is an unrenewed Heart, and Truth may have many to ſide with it upon the account of ſecular Intereſt: What Multitudes followed Chriſt for the *Loaves*, whoſe Hearts reliſhed not his *Doctrine* nor *himſelf*; though he is the *Bread of God that came down from Heaven to give Life unto the World*, Joh. 6. 26, 27, 33. 'Tis good indeed to profeſs what is indeed the Truth, and to be of that party which is moſt ſober and Godly. But the *Girdle of Truth*, will ſignifie little without the *Breaſt-plate of Righteouſneſs*; the form of Godlineſs will not avail, if the Heart be a ſtranger to, and inwardly diſlike the Power of Godlineſs.

Judas was turned to the Doctrine of

Chriſt as to an Opinion, and he aſſociated himſelf with the moſt eminent of the Diſciples, being one of the twelve Apoſtles, but he valued the *Bagg* more than the *Faith*; he talkt like a Follower of Chriſt; but his Heart went after his Covetouſneſs, and at laſt for *thirty pieces of Silver* he *ſold* his Lord, and *loſt* himſelf.

Oh! Take heed of ſuch an imagination, that if you are of ſuch a way, or party, or Congregation, you are certainly Converts. In the Church at *Jeruſalem* there was a falſe and diſſembling *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, Act. 5. 1,—4. In the Church of *Corinth* there were *ſome that had not the Knowledge of God*, who were aſleep in Sin, and whom the Apoſtle endeavours to *awake to Righteouſneſs*, 1 Cor. 15. 34. There may be turning to a *party* without *inward Purity*, and this is but turning the *Church* into a *Stage*, and *acting a part* there. And as turning to a party is not *Converſion*, ſo ceaſing to be *fierce* for a party, is not *Apoſtacy*, but 'tis a *Moderate healing temper*, which would do a *mighty kindneſs* at *this day*; and have a great tendency to the Churches *Peace* and *Edification*.

2. Zeal about *Circumſtantials in Religion* is miſtaken for Converſion. This ſort of Zeal is ſometimes joyn'd with *groſs ignorance*,

rance, and then 'tis *Ignis fatuus*, a *fooliſh fire*; and ſometimes 'tis joyn'd with great *impatience and fury* againſt every thing that ſtands in it's way, and then 'tis perfect *Wild-fire*. In the Apoſtles dayes, ſome were exceeding hot for *Circumciſion*: Others did as loudly cry up *Uncircumciſion*. But the Apoſtle decryes the Ardour and heat both of the one and the other party, and plainly tells them, that *Neither Circumciſion availeth any thing, nor Uncircumciſion*; neither of theſe things by themſelves, can prove a man a Convert, and in a State of Salvation; but a *new Creature*, but *Faith which worketh by Love*, Gal. 5. 6. *Chap.* 6. 15.

Thoſe that place all Religion in *bare Conformity*, and are eager for Ceremonies, but neglect the ſubſtance of Chriſtianity, and remain without Faith, Truth, Love, Humility and ſerious Holineſs; they will find theſe Ceremonies inſignificant to ſecure them at Death and Judgment. And on the other ſide, they who place all their Religion in *Non-conformity*, but yet are greatly conformed to a vain and ſinful World, are as proud, envious and revengeful, as ſenſual and covetous, as intemperate, unjuſt and unclean as others in the World are; though theſe ſeem to go in a

different path, yet 'tis a path in the *ſame broad way* that leads to Deſtruction.

3. Turning to *Errour*, and *forwardneſs to promote errours that are very dangerous*, is alſo miſtaken for Converſion. Many that are *unlearned and unſtable, do wreſt the Scriptures to their own Deſtruction*, 2 Pet. 3. 16. and yet vainly ſuppoſe they are contending for the Faith, and are in the right way to Salvation, this is not Converſion but *Deluſion*; and the greater the Confidence is, the Deluſion is the ſtronger. When *Satan transforms himſelf into an Angel of Light*, and his Miniſters appear *as the Miniſters of Righteouſneſs*; and Errour is *dreſs't up*, as if it were moſt *certain and Sacred Truth*; how many are led away, and believe lies; and are induſtrious to perſwade others alſo to believe them! And *ſo much* is placed in the embracing of theſe falſhoods, as if it were *damnable* to *reject* them.

But I Counſel you to remember that of the Apoſtle, *Jam.* 5. 20. that turning *from* an Errour and not *to* it, is the way to ſave a Soul from Death. Obſerve concerning theſe deluded ones, whether ſome ſpiritual Pride, or carnal Affection, or notorious Omiſſions, were not the fore-runners of their being perverted; whether they

they don't allow themſelves in the neglect of plainly commanded Duties, bearing ſome *fruits* or other which *diſcover* them: And whatever Joyes and Comforts they bragg of, they had better be without them, ſince they ſerve only as confirming Seals of their Deluſions.

4. Another thing miſtaken for Converſion, is *forſaking of One ſin, though there be a running into the contrary*, at leaſt an allowance of ſome Iniquity or other ſtill: He that has been exceedingly addicted to Prodigality, ceaſes perhaps his Profuſeneſs and Luxury, but runs into the other Extream, and becomes exceſſively greedy after gain; this Man has not turned from *ſin to God*, but from *one ſin to another*. To reform in one thing, nay, in many things, is inſufficient, if the Reformation be not univerſal; one ſin loved and liv'd in, is enough to prove one Unconverted, and will be ſufficient to deſtroy: A Man that has one Dagger thruſt into his Heart, dyes as certainly as *Julius Cæſar* did, of all the Wounds which were given him in the *Senate*; or as *Attilius Regulus* did, who was pierced from Head to Foot in the *nayled Barrel*.

5. A *blameleſs Converſation* is alſo miſtaken for Converſion, though there be no

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Care or Obſervation, no *Renovation of the Heart and Nature*: The righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees was ſhort, becauſe only external; if they imbrued not *their hands in blood*, they were unconcern'd, though their Hearts were full of *Wrath and Hatred*; if free from *actual Adultery*, inward *Concupiſcence* was *nothing* with them: But our Lord rightly expounds the Law, ſhews how being ſpiritual, it reaches the Soul, and obliges unto internal Purity and Righteouſneſs; and he expreſsly affirms, *Mat.* 5. 20. *Except your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* The Apoſtle *Paul* tells us, before his Converſion he *was, touching the righteouſneſs of the Law blameleſs*, Phil. 3. 6. Yet though his Life were free from blame, and ordered according to a more than ordinary Phariſaical ſtrictneſs and ſeverity, yet his Heart was void of ſaving Grace, 'till he was beaten off from Confidence in himſelf, and he was turned to the Faith of Chriſt.

6. Bodily *Temper* and *good Nature* is miſtaken for Converſion: Some by reaſon of their Conſtitutions are *naturally Mild*, they take this for the *Grace of Patience*, and for the *meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt*; 'tis the temper of ſome to be *Liberal and*

Free-

Free-hearted, they take this for the *Grace of Chriſtian Charity*: When they behold others of crooked and crabbed Diſpoſitions, and perceive themſelves of a more even and loving temper; they are very apt to be deceived, in judging what is the *effect* of their *natural temperament*, to be the *ſanctifying work* of the *Spirit*: But Oh, how much does Converting Grace differ from meer Nature, when moſt refined! He that is naturally Patient, is not ſo in *Obedience* to God, but becauſe Nature *inclines him not* to be *otherwiſe*. Nature has no regard to the *pleaſing of God*, nor to the *enjoying of him*; neither does it *deſire help* from him, but is *centred in it ſelf*, and *well enough contented* without him.

7. Another thing miſtaken for Converſion, is *Education, and reſtraining Grace*: Some that have been brought up under Religious Parents, and have lived in places free from Temptation, and by this means have been preſerved from the Worlds Pollutions, they are very apt to call that *Renewing Grace*, which is no more than *Grace reſtraining*: But when theſe do change their Place, and change their Company, how does Corruption diſcover it ſelf? Experience very ſad has ſhewn, that they who under their Parents eyes and care have

ſeemed

seemed very serious and well inclined, when their Parents have been removed by Death, all the good Inclinations of the Children, have been as it were buried in their Parents graves; and with a strange kind of eagerness have they run out to great excess of riot.

Joash, during the Life of *Jehoiada the Priest*, who had saved him from being Murther'd, and brought him to the Throne, seemed a Prince very well Inclined, but after *Jehoiada* his Death, all his Goodness vanished, he left the Lord Jehovah, and shamefully Apostatized into Idolatry; and when he was faithfully reproved by *Zachariah*, the Son of *Jehoiada*, he *Commanded* him to be *Stoned*: Wicked and Ungrateful Man! thus to take away the Life of the Son, who was himself preserved by the Father, 2 *Chron.* 24. 17, — 23. And truly, if you observe Education and restraining Grace at the *very best*, when it has most *kept* Persons *within compass*, yet even then there is a *levity of spirit* in them that are thus restrained; serious Discourses are not so savoury to them, as those that are more frothy and vain; and upon Self-reflection they may observe in themselves a *secret dislike* of Religion and *strictness*, which they dare not *openly* shew.

8. Con-

8. Conviction in *the Conſcience* is alſo miſtaken for Converſion: When Conſcience is thoroughly awakened, and the *ſpirit of bondage* cauſes great *fear* of Wrath; when Mercy is implored, and Pardon of Sin is begg'd with great earneſtneſs, and the force of Conſcience produces a reformation of ſeveral Miſcarriages; this may ſeem Converſion, and ſometimes ends in it, and it often iſſues otherwiſe. *Pharaoh* under Conviction, cryes out, *I have ſinned*, reſolves *to let Iſrael go*, deſires *Moſes his Prayers* for him, yet after this *hardens his Heart*, and that Obduration ended in his Deſtruction. The Children of *Iſrael*, under Affliction and Conviction together, *when God ſlew them, then they ſought him, they returned and enquired early after God; they remembred God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer*: And yet though Conſcience compell'd them thus far, their Heart remained Unconverted, was *not right with God, neither were they ſtedfaſt in his Covenant*, Pſal. 78. 34,--37. There may be amazing terrour in the Conſcience, and yet the Heart remain *carnal* and *ill inclined*, endeavouring to caſt the *awakened* Conſcience into a *dead ſleep* again, that without any check or trouble it may return to its former perverſe and evil way.

9. Tem-

9. Temporary *Faith and forwardneſs in Profeſſion* is likewiſe miſtaken for Converſion: Thoſe Hearers of the Goſpel whom our Lord compares to the *ſtony ground*, were forward to hear, and received the Word *with joy*, and for a *while believed*; they aſſented to the Truth of the Word, and look'd upon it as worthy of acceptation; but it was not *ſo acceptable* in their account, as to make them willing *to loſe all* for the ſake of it; thus *far*, thus *deeply* it had not *taken root* in them; therefore *when Perſecution aroſe becauſe of the Word, they were offended*, and in *time of Temptation they fell away*, Luk. 8. 13. Theſe joyful forward Profeſſors ſeemed Converts, but really were not Converted: Neither were thoſe that went a degree further, who brought forth, not only the *blade* of an external Profeſſion, but alſo *ſome fruit*; but being *choaked with cares and riches, and the pleaſures of this life*, did not τελεσφορειν, bring forth any fruit *unto perfection*, v. 14.

10. Spiritual *Gifts*, eſpecially if *in ſome Excellency*, are miſtaken for Converſion: When there is a great meaſure of Notional knowledge, and ability to Diſcourſe well of the things of God, variety and fluency of Utterance in Prayer; theſe things take

take with others, and are apt to (a) *puff up* those themselves that have them, with a great conceit of their great Attainments, as if they were spiritually alive, and spiritual Worshippers of God, who *will be Worshipped in Spirit and in Truth*: And yet these Gifts may be, and often are without any *true Humility*, and in them that know not the *more excellent way of Love*.

(a) *Est enim superbia, non Magnitudo sed tumor; quod autem tumet, videtur magnum, sed non est sanum*, Augustin. *Serm.* 27. de Tempore.

Gifts are to be *earnestly Coveted*, 1 Cor. 12. *ult.* yet they are not too much to be magnified: A man may have the *Gift of Prophecy*, who is not a *Saint*, but a *worker of Iniquity*, Mat. 7. 22, 23. A man may have the *Gift of Prayer*, that has not the *Spirit of Grace and Supplication*; and then, though he Prayes never so well as to outward Expression, yet his Heart being carnal, proud, self-conceited, self-designing in his Duties, he is really to be rank'd among the *carnal and the formal Worshippers*: Under how many Praying lips are there covetous, wrathful, lustful and haughty Hearts? and these *Hearts are far from God*, whatever good words are given to him: And if the *Heart* is *absent* from a Duty, *God* is also *absent*; and that Duty, as splendid

as

as it ſeems, is really *Hypocriſie and Provocation.*

Judas had Gifts, and ſo had *Demas*, but had they ſaving Grace? this World had the higheſt room in the Heart of the one and of the other. I read in Scripture that an *evil Spirit* came upon *Saul*, and he fell a *Propheſying in the houſe*, 1 Sam. 18. 10. I have read of a *Scottiſh Major* who excelled in the Gift of Prayer, but had made a compact with the Devil. O Profeſſor! do not reſt and glory in thy Gifts, but humbly uſe them, and be ſure let it be within the ſphere of thy Calling. Labour to excell in *Love* and *lowlineſs of Mind*, that's the way to have the more comfortable evidence of Converſion in thy own ſpirit, and to be the more truly ſerviceable to the Church of Chriſt.

Thus have I diſcover'd many miſtakes about Converſion, that your danger might be apprehended and avoided: And pray remember that *groundleſs Confidence* you *are* Converted, is one of the *ſtrongeſt barrs* againſt the Grace of God, one of the mightieſt hindrances of Converſion. And, Oh! how unconceivably woful and dreadful will it be, ſtill to continue confident, till *Hell it ſelf for ever*, but *too late convince* you, that your *Confidence is utterly* unreaſonable.

USE

USE II. If Converſion be thus neceſſary, *Behold the madneſs of refuſing to be Converted:* There is an *hereditary Phrenzy* that is derived from the *old fallen Adam* unto *all* his Poſterity, not one of his Children is born in his *right Wits*; the Underſtanding of none return until they are born again. Phyſicians tell us, that the ſigns of Madneſs are *furor & audacia*, fury and boldneſs; and alas, how bold are men in Sin! *They ruſh into it as an Horſe into the battel*, Jer. 8. 6. They are ſo dating as to fight againſt the Almighty, though *none ever hardned himſelf againſt him and proſper'd:* And theſe audacious Sinners when reproved, and urged to returning and ſubmiſſion, they are full of fury and rage, and are ready to rend the Reprover. The Madneſs of every one that will not be Converted, I ſhall demonſtrate in ſeveral particulars; and Oh, that the Diſcovery may tend to the Cure of it!

1. He that will not be Converted, he *will not be pardon'd, though he is Condemn'd to dye eternally, and a Pardon is offer'd him*, he hears the Goſpel, which is the *Word of Reconciliation*; he is told that *God is ready to forgive*, forward to be at Peace, nay, *beſeeches him to be reconciled*, 2 Cor. 5. 20.

but he will not be intreated, he will continue an Enemy; he chuſes to lye under *Guilt* and *Wrath* ſtill, and acts ſo ſenſleſſly, as if *everlaſting Burnings* were not to be *dreaded*, but to be *deſired*.

2. He that will not be Converted, *he will not be healed of a moſt deadly Plague, though the Phyſician do offer freely and throughly to Cure him.* Sin is certainly the *ſoreſt* Diſtemper, becauſe 'tis the *Souls Diſeaſe*: No Souls dye but of this Plague, and all Souls muſt periſh and be loſt that refuſe to be healed. Chriſt came on purpoſe to heal, but frantick Sinners are more afraid of their Phyſician than of their Sickneſs, though never ſo dangerous and mortal: The *unjuſt* Man ſayes, let me alone to be *unjuſt ſtill*, though my *Unrighteouſneſs* hinder my entrance into *the Heavenly Kingdom*; the *proud* Man ſayes, let me be *proud ſtill*, whatever the Scripture ſpeaks of *Gods reſiſting the Proud*; the *unclean* Sinner ſayes, let me *be filthy ſtill*, if I can't go to Heaven without being Holy, I care not to come thither. Thus *Jeruſalem* of old would not be cleanſed, the Lord offer'd to ſanctifie and heal her, but ſhe would by no means conſent to it, *Jer.* 13. 27. *Woe unto thee, O Jeruſalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when ſhall it once be!*

3. He

3. He that will not be Converted is certainly frantick, for he will *not be eaſed of a load that he can't bear:* Can he ſtand under the *weight of thouſands and millions of Iniquities?* No, no; the leaſt of all is heavy enough to ſink him into Hell; Oh how exceeding low will he be depreſſed under the whole number! Can he bear up under the *Almighty's Indignation?* that Wrath has ſuch righteouſneſs and ſtrength with it, that none can ſtand before it. Now if the Sinner would become a Convert, Iniquity ſhould be removed, divine Anger appeaſed through a Mediatour, but he utterly rejects the motion.

4. He that will not be Converted, is *reſolved to remain poor, though the greateſt Treaſure, the Pearl of price be proffer'd him, and may be had for prizing and acceptance:* The *ſecond Adam* tells us, how we are *beggar'd* in the *firſt*; thoſe words may truly be applyed to every natural Man, *Thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked,* Rev. 3. 17. Now our Lord adds, *v.* 18. *I counſel thee to buy of me Gold tryed in the fire, that thou mayeſt be rich:* This Gold can't be bought too dear; nay, 'tis bought *without money, and without price:* Parting with our Sins and Idols, which we preferr'd before this tried

Gold, and willingneſs to have it, is in a Goſpel ſenſe *buying* of it. But Unconverted Sinners are ſo *poor* in underſtanding, that they preferr their beggery and luſts, before all the *Unſearchable Riches of Chriſt.*

5. He that will not be Converted, is *reſolved to be a Slave, though he is called unto Liberty:* In the Goſpel, *Liberty is proclaimed to the Captives, and the opening of the Priſon to them that are bound,* Iſa. 61. 1. The Son of God did, and ſuffer'd much to procure this Liberty; he paid a vaſt Price, when he gave himſelf a ranſom: But frantick Sinners are fond of their Fetters, they chuſe to be drudges in the baſeſt work, which is the working of Iniquity; they fancy (ſuch is the diſtemper and vanity of their Imagination) the bondage of Corruption (though the worſt of bondage, and the forerunner of being for ever in Chains of Darkneſs) to be eaſie and pleaſant, and they will not come to the Son to *make them free indeed.*

6. He that will not be Converted, the *Hopes that he entertains are moſt unreaſonable:* He Promiſes to himſelf ſafety, though in the greateſt danger; he ſayes he ſhall have Peace, though the way of Peace he knows not, but goes in wicked wayes,

that

that are full of trouble at preſent, and end in trouble that is endleſs. How unreaſonable is it to entertain a *Hope that will be cut off*, a *Truſt that will prove like a ſpiders webb?* Job 8. 14. Thou that art *reſolved not to turn* from ſin, and yet hopeſt *all will be well* with thee, thou mayeſt as well quaff off a draught of the *deadlieſt Poyſon*, and refuſing an Antidote, hope 'twill not *hurt* thee; thou may'ſt as well throw thy ſelf into the *fierceſt Flame*, and hope 'twill not *burn* thee. Poor, diſtracted, ſelf-deceiving Soul! as certainly as God and his Word are true, ſo certainly thy Hopes are vain, and thy ſelf miſerable.

7. He that will not be Converted, he *hearkens to a Deſtroyer* that hates him, deſigns to deceive him with dying and lying Vanities; he *believes* him that is *moſt falſe*, and *truſts* himſelf under the Power of a *Murtherer*; but he is *deaf to a Redeemer*, he ſlights the offer both of *Grace and Glory*, and *will not come to him*, though for his coming he *may have Life*, and that eternal.

8. He that will not be Converted, he *dares the Power and Juſtice of God to do their worſt againſt him.* The *Potſherd* is fearleſs of the *Iron rod*, that can ſo eaſily daſh it all to pieces, the *dried Stubble* is fearleſs of the *devouring Flame.* When a

Sinner is deaf and obstinate against Gods Call to turn, the Language of that stubbornness is plainly this, *That he despises the riches of his Goodness, that he fears not his sorest and eternal Vengeance.*

Alas, alas! how has Sin turn'd this World into a *meer Bedlam!* the Words, the Actions of most, declare they *are beside themselves*; but nothing more argues the *prevalency and mischievousness* of the *Madness*, than *refusing to be turned*: Thou that thus refusest, it had been good for thee thou hadst never been Called. *Capernaum*'s hearing of Christ and Heaven, and contemning both, made *her Case worse* than that of *Sodom*, Mat. 11, 23, 24. What our Lord said to *him* that *betray'd* him, that may I say to every one that is resolved *still to reject Him* and Converting Grace, *It were good for thee that thou hadst never been born*, and *better* to have been born in the *darkest place* of the *whole Earth*, than in this place where the *joyful sound* is *heard*, and the *light* of the Gospel *shines*.

USE III. If Conversion be of such absolute Necessity, Learn the Inexcusableness of them who have *been almost perswaded to be Converts to God*, and yet afterward *return again to Wickedness and Folly*. Great Pains

Pains have been taken with many that periſh, to have prevented their ruine; Meſſengers have been ſent both to warn and wooe them, that Wrath might be eſcaped, and a Saviour accepted: Chriſt himſelf has *come*, has *ſtood* and *knock'd at the door*, and his *Spirit* has *ſtriven*, that he might prevail to have it opened; and ſometimes the Convictions have been ſo ſtrong, the evil of Sin ſo apparent, the neceſſity of Chriſt ſo evident, and the reaſonableneſs of Converſion ſo undenyable, that Sinners have been even almoſt upon the Point of turning: But alas! ſome beloved Luſt, ſome Idol, ſome ſinful Gain or Pleaſure, ſome ſelfiſh reſpect and Intereſt, has been the Impediment unto a thorough Converſion; and with the neglect of Chriſt, grieving of his Spirit, Conſcience has dropt aſleep again, the Judgment has been clouded, and the Will has been fixt and ſettled in its evil purpoſe. Now the Inexcuſableneſs of the Sin and Folly of ſuch as have been *near* Converſion, but *never are indeed* Converted, I ſhall thus manifeſt.

1. They *offer great Violence to Conſcience*, for Conſcience in them has been awakened, and told them roundly of their evil wayes and doings, that have not been good; it has often preſs'd them to turn to God,

and reproached them because of their backwardness to do it: Conscience has *upbraided* them with the *unfruitfulness* of the *works of darkness*, Rom. 6. 21. and has told them, that sin has nothing but deceived them all along, and will certainly damn them in the conclusion, if *they go on still in their Trespasses*. What Apology can be made for that Sinner that is resolved to persist in his pernicious way, notwithstanding so clear a light that *shines*, and *shews the destruction* at the *end* of it? notwithstanding such *admonitions* from Conscience, a *Monitor* within his *own breast*?

2. They that are only almost Converted, in a special manner *resist and vex the Spirit of God*. Conviction is the Spirits work; and when a Sinner, though *Convinced how ill 'tis to be so*, is resolved at last to *remain a Sinner still*, this is a Grief and Vexation to the Holy Ghost. Does that Spirit follow after the workers of Iniquity, in the broad way, and tell them how much it does concern them to turn out of it, before *their steps do* quite *take hold of Hell*? Does he come and visit them in the *far Countrey*, and tell them, they must needs perish, if they abide there, but they may have a sure and joyful Welcome, and be satisfied with *Bread*, if they *come home to*

their

their Fathers house? Luk. 15. Do they *begin to yield*, and go *some steps* towards *Home*, but then become *deaf* to the Spirits *Motions*, and run back again, and that unto the *fartheſt part* of the far Countrey? Do they upon the whole matter, preferr the *Husks* before *Bread*, and *chuſe* to *ſtarve for Hunger?* What Excuſe can be brought for ſuch Obſtinacy? But here by the way it may be demanded, Can any reſiſt the Spirit of the Almighty? Is not his Operation too ſtrong for Creatures to withſtand? I Anſwer, If God ſhould put forth his Power, no Creature indeed could reſiſt him; but he is a free Agent, his *Will* tempers his Works, and gives *Gage* to his *Power*, putting forth ſo much as he pleaſes and no more: And thus Sinners may and do reſiſt him and his Spirit, and hereby exceedingly heighten their Provocations, *Act.* 7. 51.

3. They that are only almoſt Converted, do *Sin againſt their own experience*, they have *known and ſeen that Sin is an evil and a bitter thing*; they have *taſted the Wormwood and the Gall*; and perceived how deceitful its pretences unto Pleaſure, are, they have felt the intolerable ſmart of thoſe wounds which Sin has made in their Conſciences. Oh what an heavy burthen has Sin

Sin been found! Now after all this, to become ſtupid again; and to make a mock of Sin, and to *return with the Dog to the Vomit, and with the Swine that was waſhed unto her wallowing in the mire*, 2 Pet. 2: *ult.* juſtly is the *laſt ſtate of ſuch worſe than the beginning.*

4. They that are only almoſt Converted, *bring great reproach upon Religion*, they really undermine Religion by ſeeming to eſpouſe the intereſt of it; and afterwards apoſtatizing and deſerting it. Thoſe that are *almoſt* Converts, are *judged* to be Converts *altogether*; and look like the Followers of Chriſt. When therefore they are either allured or affrighted away from him, 'tis not without a very great affront offered to Him; for 'tis in effect to ſay that they have tried both *Chriſt* and *Sin*, and upon trial, they *judge Sin to be the beſt Maſter of the two.* Thus in a ſenſe *they crucifie the Son of God afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame*, Heb. 6. 6. They value Him no more than if he had been a Deceiver, and juſtly put to a Death that was ſo Ignominious; and while they ſay, *Not Chriſt but our Pride, not Chriſt but the World, not Chriſt but our Luſts ſhall rule us, and have our Hearts*; they but too much reſemble the *Jews*, crying out, *Not this*

this Man but Barabbas, though *that Man* was *Jesus*, and *Barabbas was a Robber*.

5. They that are only almost Converts, *harden the Hearts, and strengthen the hands of the profane in their wickedness*. When such perceive *these* who they thought were turned Saints, returning again to *their old sins*, this makes them more resolute in Sins service, and more unalterably fixt in their evil way. These half Converts, when they totally fall away from all Profession of Religion; how do they advance Satans Kingdom, and establish the Throne of the Prince of Darkness!

6. What *poor things* are those that hinder the almost Converted from becoming *Converts altogether*! Relapsing is styled *folly*, *Psal.* 85. 8. What *Wisdom* can there be in departing from God? Is the Ease, the Honour, the Pleasure, the Wealth, which Sin and Mammon bragg of, comparable to the Grace of God, or the Glory that will follow? *Death* will certainly prove the World a *Trifle*, the Worldling a *Beggar*, and he that has forsaken God for the Worlds sake, to be altogether *void of understanding*. Suppose a Convert stript naked of all, as *Job* was upon the Dunghil, he is *as having nothing*, but yet *he does possess all things*, 2 Cor. 6. 10. Suppose the

the almost Convert is never so great a gainer by his backsliding, he is *as having much* but *he does possess nothing.*

7. They that are only almost Converted, *come very near Heaven and yet miss of it*; they come near the Port, and yet are Shipwrack't. It was a torment to the Rich man in Hell, to *see Heaven afar off*, though he had liv'd a sensual Life, and never minded Heaven: But how sad will it be to the almost Converts, to remember, that once they were in a fair way to Heaven, and not *far off from that Kingdom*; and if they had but parted with *one or two more Sins*, if they had but taken a *little more pains*, and had been *constant in their diligence*, if they had but consented to *some few more Conditions* which were but very reasonable; God would have been theirs, Christ theirs, and Heaven theirs for ever. But their Lusts befool'd them, the old Serpent beguiled them, and they *themselves held fast deceit, and refused to return in* Truth, *Jer.* 8. 5.

USE IV. Of Exhortation, unto all *Unconverted Sinners, to hearken, consider, and turn to God.* You that have been long *deaf*, at last *hear* the *call* from Heaven, you that have been long *in darkness*, at last

admit

admit and *comprehend the Light*, which shines about you: You that have hitherto *been dead* in Sin, be attentive and obedient to the *Voice of the Son of God*, and *live*. O ye Atheists, that profess to know God but in works deny him! O ye Covetous and Unrighteous, that will be rich if you can, though it be by unjust wayes, and will venture the losing of your precious Souls, for the sake of a little perishing Treasure! O ye intemperate and unclean, that are bewitched with present Delights, and fear not eternal Torments! O all ye workers of iniquity of what sorts, of what sizes soever! Turn ye, turn ye from your evil wayes unto the true and living God, who is the God of Mercy, Peace, and Grace, and Love. He himself does really and seriously, and earnestly call you, as well as Man who is his Messenger. Arguments are not wanting *in themselves* really of *great strength*, to perswade: Oh that the *Spirit of God*, would set an *Edge* upon them, and make them *strong to you*, that your Consciences may yield to the force of them; and your Hearts may be willingly captivated into a sincere and saving compliance with them.

1. 'Tis wonderful Grace that you *have leave to turn*, Do we read that *this* was ever

ever *allowed* to the *Apoſtate Angels?* was there a *door of hope* ever open'd to *them?* after they had departed from God, was there any *ſpace* or *place* for *Repentance* granted them, or *Liberty to return* with intimation of a *readineſs to receive them?* The Scripture ſayes, that *God ſpared not the Angels that ſinn'd, but caſt them down to Hell, and deliver'd them into Chains of Darkneſs, to be reſerved unto Judgment*, 2 Pet. 2. 4. Oh 'twas a dreadful fall, from the higheſt Heaven to the loweſt Hell, eternal Puniſhment followed Sin at the heels, and not the leaſt mention of any ſeaſon of Grace afforded them: Nothing done, nothing ſpoken in order to their return and recovery. *Admirable* φιλανθρωπία, *kindneſs of God*, and *good will towards Man!* that when the fallen Angels were ſuffered to lye where they fell, *He* ſhould be permitted, nay ſo earneſtly ſolicited, to *return, though fallen alſo by his iniquity.*

2. 'Tis wonderful Patience, *that after the refuſing ſo many calls, you ſhould be called to turn, ſtill.* God ſhews himſelf *rich in goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering*, Rom. 2. 4. elſe he had ceaſed Calling long ago, and come to a reſolution, that the *unjuſt ſhould be unjuſt ſtill*; and that thoſe who *would not be* purged, *ſhould never* be purged,

purged, till *his fury* took hold on them, *Ezek.* 24. 13. If a merciful Prince offer Pardon to a condemn'd Malefactor *once*, if a ranſom be tender'd once for the Redemption of a Captive, the Malefactor, the Captive ought to acknowledge it an Act of much Grace. And if the firſt offer were not accepted, every one would be ready to ſay, 'twere juſt the Malefactor ſhould dye; and the Captive remain under bondage ever after. Aſtoniſhing Patience! that God ſhould call not once or twice only, but thouſands of times; and yet to this day continue Calling, that Chriſt ſhould ſtand many years knocking at the door, and though the door be kept faſt ſhut againſt him, yet he is *not gone away*, but while I am ſpeaking may be *knocking again at this very inſtant*. Fooliſh Heart, at laſt be ſo *wiſe*, as to *open*; and bewail thy folly in being ſo averſe to give admiſſion to the Lord of Life and Author of Salvation.

3. Conſider *who 'tis that calls you to turn.* Oh refuſe not, rebell not, for 'tis the Glorious and bleſſed God, who calls you to yielding and ſubmiſſion. None ſo great, none ſo good as he: He proteſts by *his Life*, he has *no Pleaſure in your Death*; therefore *He himſelf* bids you turn, and

caſt

cast away every Transgression; and assures you, *iniquity shall not be your ruine*, Ezek. 18. 30, 31. For man to refuse to hearken unto God, is meer madness; 'tis disobedience to the highest Soveraign, 'tis base ingratitude against the highest Kindness, 'tis in effect the charging the God of Grace and Truth with falshood and ill-will; 'tis a rejecting the best and safest Counsel, and 'tis the way to engage the great Jehovah, to be much more an enemy, by refusing to turn and be reconciled to Him.

4. Consider what the *Lords design is in requiring you to become Converts.* He could glorifie his Truth and Righteousness, and make his Power known in executing vengeance, and in punishing you with everlasting Destruction, but he chuses rather to magnifie his Mercy and Grace, therefore *he waits to be Gracious*, Isa. 30. 18. and if he be *exalted that he may shew Mercy*, his Mercy will be exceeding plenteous and glorious in the blessed Effects of it; if you *forsake your evil wayes and thoughts, and turn to him.* In turning you to himself, the Lord designs to demonstrate, that his *Grace can superabound*, where *Sin never so much abounds*: he designs to shew forth the merit of his *Sons blood*, and the *Power*

of

of his Spirit; he designs to *new make* what sin had *marr'd*, and to produce *Vessels of honour* out of the *corrupt masse* of defiled Clay: In short, he does design to *form you for himself*, that you may be most blessed for ever in himself, and both *here* and eternally shew forth his Praises. And what colour or shadow of Reason is there, that you should walk contrary to such a God? that you should thwart and oppose such gracious Designs, by refusing to return?

5. Turn ye; *Why wo'nt you Live?* Is *All-sufficiency* to be lookt upon as *empty*, the *chiefest good* become *evil* in *your Eyes?* Are you fallen out with the truest felicity, as if it were not at all desirable? Is the perfection of Happiness fear'd, as if 'twere Misery? Is *Heaven shunn'd*, as if 'twere *Hell?* and do you *avoid the Path* that leads to it, that you may be *sure never to come thither?* These are strange Interrogatories, but they serve for Conviction; that those who will not turn, may be sensible *they wrong their own Souls*, Prov. 8. 36. in contemning the tender of Eternal Life and Salvation.

6. Turn ye, *Why will ye Dye?* Is the Guilt of Sin become a light matter? the Wrath of the Almighty easie to be born?

do you make a mock of that which makes *the whole Creation groan and travel in pain together?* Rom. 8. 22. Is it no longer fearful to fall into the hands of the Living God? and has the ſecond Death ceaſed to be terrible? Are the Tears of the Damned dryed up? Is their Sorrow turned into Joy? Is the never-dying Worm to be hugg'd in your boſoms? and everlaſting Fire a thing to be play'd with? Oh! What do you mean who will not turn? Why do ye *love Death?* Prov. 8. *ult.* Why have ye the greateſt hand in your own ruine? Why are ye Devils to your ſelves? Why do ye deſperately ruſh on in Sin, and in the end throw your ſelves down into everlaſting Burnings?

7. To perſwade you to turn, Conſider, *Converſion is a thing that never was, that never will be Repented of:* The *Prophane*, in the *other World at fartheſt*, repent they did not *turn at all*; the *Hypocrites* repent they did not *turn in truth*; but ſincere Converts are glad they are ſo, and ſee good reaſon ſtill to continue ſo. The Apoſtle tells us, that *the Gifts and Calling of God are without Repentance*, Rom. 11. 29. when he effectually Calls any, and gives Converting Grace to them, it is ſuch a Gift that God never repents of beſtowing, neither

neither ever does he take it quite away again: It is such a Gift as Man never repents he has received, but has good cause to desire that God would *perfect what concerns him, and not forsake the work of his own hand*, Psal. 138. *ult.*

8. Conversion will make you *great Blessings in the places where you live*: Converts are the *Horse-men and Chariots of Israel*, because as so many *Princes* they have *power* with the *God of Israel*. *Solomon* tells us, that *Righteousness exalts a Nation*, Prov. 14. 34. The more *Converts to Righteousness* there are, the more the *Nation* is *beholding* to them; but *Obstinate Sinners* are not only their own, but the *Nations greatest Enemies*. When Gods *Anger* has been exceedingly provoked, so that he has doom'd a Nation to Destruction, Conversion even in this Case will do a kindness, *Jer.* 18. 7, 8. *At what instant I speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil way, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them*: Though *England* at this day, has *many Enemies* whose Power and Policy is engaged against it; yet it is *chiefly endanger'd* by its *sins and wickedness*; A speedy and general Conversion to

God, would certainly be *Englands* ſecurity and eſtabliſhment.

9. If you are Converts in truth, the *News of it will be heard and known in Heaven, and occaſion Joy there*; Luk. 15. 10. *I ſay unto you, there is Joy in the preſence of the Angels of God, over one Sinner that repenteth.* The Angels did Sing at the *Birth* of a Saviour, *Glory be to God in the higheſt, on Earth peace, good Will towards Men*; and they rejoyce at the *New-birth* of all that are ſaved.

10. Conſider the *vaſt difference that is between the End of Converts, and thoſe that dye Unconverted.* They that are *wiſe*, look not only at the *begininng*, but to the *end* of things, and they cannot think *well* of that which muſt needs *end ill.* An *Unconverted Sinner dying*, is one of the *ſaddeſt ſpectacles* in the World; he is leaving all his good things, all his Conſolation behind him; he and his hopes dye together, and *whither* does Death ſend him? to the *Bar* of an Holy and Righteous God. 'Tis a *terrible Clauſe* in the *Statute* of Dying, *After this the Judgment*, Heb. 9. 27. And how can the wicked Man, who *would live*, and *did dye* in his *Sins*, be able to *ſtand* in Judgment? Death comes to the Unconverted armed with a *Sting*; with a Sting

did

did I say? nay, the Stings are thousands and millions, for *every one* of his Sins is a Sting in his Death, and his Sins being more in number than the Stars of Heaven, when Death seizes him, how *many Stings will pierce him*, and put him to Pain which will be Eternal? If he dyes *stupid*, 'tis so much the *worse*; for Hell being not *fear'd* or *thought of*, when *felt* will be the more *woful*: If he dyes in *horrour*, alas, the greatest Despair and Anguish on a *Death-bed*, is no more to be compared with the *Agonies* of the *Damned Spirits*, than a *Whisper* is to be compared with *Thunder*, or the *smallest Spark of fire* is to be compared with those *devouring Flames that in* —66 *did burn down* London.

But on the other side, how *ends* the Convert? Death is a fall from every thing but Grace, and Grace then is perfected in Glory: The *end* of the upright and sincere Convert is *Peace*, Psal. 37. 37. and a peaceful Death is the forerunner of an *everlasting Rest*: If he should dye in a Cloud, he would shine not at all the less brightly in another World; all sin, and fears, and tears will be gone, as soon as he enters into Heavens door, and sees his Lord there; If he sets, as the Sun in the cleerest Summers evening, his Death is encouraging to

others, comfortable to himſelf, but ten thouſand thouſand times more Comfort will he preſently have, as ſoon as ever he is got out of, and is *abſent from the body, and is preſent with the Lord*, 2 Cor. 5. 8.

I have done with the Motives to Converſion; *And now for ſhame be ſilent, all tongues that talk againſt turning to God! Apoſtate Angels, be for ever mute! what Adverſaries and lying Spirits are ye, in diſſwading Man from Converſion, and in aſſerting, that though he turn not, he ſhall not ſurely dye? And Carnal Reaſon, confeſs thy ſelf quite baffled with ſtrength of Argument, and that not one word more of good ſenſe can be ſpoken againſt the Sinners Converſion, which is ſo much for his Intereſt both in time and to eternity.*

USE V. Of Direction, how *Sinners may become true and thorough Converts*: It greatly concerns you to be ſincere in turning, for in this matter you have *chiefly* to do with *God himſelf*, who can't be deceived with the faireſt ſhews, but underſtands perfectly the moſt ſecret thoughts, inclinations and purpoſes of the Hearts of Men; every upright Heart is open to him, and he *takes Pleaſure in the uprightneſs* which himſelf has wrought. And if there be nothing

nothing but Hypocriſie under the greateſt Profeſſion, that Hypocriſie is both obſerved and abhorred: Any thing ſhort of true and thorough Converſion, will be a *dangerous Cheating of your ſelves*; therefore, that you may be Converts indeed, I ſhall give you theſe Directions.

1. Let *ſpiritual Wiſdom and Knowledge be valued, as that which is of great price and uſefulneſs*: He that is indeed a Convert, is *called out of darkneſs into marvellous light*, 1 Pet. 2. 9. In this *Verſe* where my Text lies, *Converting the Soul* and *making Wiſe the Simple* are joyn'd together, the one is neceſſary and ſubſervient to the other. That *Devotion* of which *Ignorance* is the *Mother*, is indeed a following of blind and deluded, or crafty and deluding Guides; but a turning to, and a following of God, it is not.

Be well Catechized and Inſtructed in the Principles of the Scripture-doctrine; let a true Light be ſet up in your Underſtandings. The Mind is the τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν, the leading Faculty, 'tis needful it be well Informed. In the firſt Creation, when *Darkneſs covered the face of the deep, God ſaid, let there be Light, and there was Light*, Gen. 1. 2, 3. and thus it is in the new Creation and Converſion, 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. *God who*

commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined into our Hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Search for Knowledge in the Scripture, as you would search for Silver or hid Treasure, and look up to Heaven for light and ability to understand it, that you may know *Christ*, and *God in him*; and what you are to *believe*, *desire* and *do* in order to your Happiness. You can't be made wise to Salvation, unless you are first made wise to Conversion.

And as you are *to acquaint* your selves with, so you are *firmly to assent* to the Doctrine revealed in the Word of God; and the more strongly you credit whatever the Word sayes, the more powerful influence will this Faith have upon your Conscience, Will and Life. *Unbelief* is the root of defection and *departing from the living God*, Heb. 3. 12. If the *arm of the Lord be revealed*, his Power shewn forth, and cause the *report* of the Word, all the Promises and Threatnings of it, to be *indeed believed*, this will have a *mighty efficacy* towards the Souls *return to God again.*

2. That you may become true Converts, be *sensible that all Mankind are fallen by Iniquity*, and are estranged from God, and *you in particular are by Nature far off from*

from Him. The Lord indeed made *Man upright, but he has ſought out many Inventions,* Eccleſ. 7. *ult.* New wayes he thought to have found of being higher and happier, but while through the ſubtilty of the old Serpent, he catcht at a ſhadow, he loſt the ſubſtance, and became both fooliſh and miſerable. *Adam* the firſt Man, corrupted the humane Nature, and as thus corrupted you partake of it, ſo that you are *by Nature Children of Wrath*; your Hearts are deſperately wicked, dangerouſly deceitful, and returning to God is that which they have a ſtrange and ſtrong antipathy againſt: The more you are ſenſible that your Hearts are thus depraved and alienated from God, the more *jealous* you will be of them; and the more *earneſt* for that *new Heart and new Spirit,* which the Lord has Promiſed in his new Covenant, *Ezek.* 36. 26. Perceiving and being burthen'd with a Diſtemper, is a good ſtep towards a Cure, eſpecially if an able Phyſician is ready to heal any that will but make uſe of him. A right ſenſe that Sin has ſet you at a diſtance from God, and that thoſe *who are far from him ſhall periſh,* Pſal. 37. 27. will have a mighty tendency to your being brought nigh to him, by the Blood and Spirit of the Lord Jeſus: And truly

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He that in the daies of his Flesh was so ready to heal corporal Maladies, is much more willing to heal the corrupted Nature, and to change and turn the Heart of every one that seriously cries, *Turn me and I shall be turned, heal me and I shall be healed, save me and I shall be* saved, *for thou art my Praise!*

3. Let *Humiliation for Sin be very hearty and very deep.* A Soul that never was truly humbled for its iniquities, still retains a liking of them, and is more easily tempted to return to them: *Humiliation* serves very much to *break the league with Sin,* the *Covenant with Death and Hell.* The Apostle *Paul,* who at his Conversion was deeply abased, was made to *tremble and to be astonished,* Act. 9. 6. seeing his Sin, the insufficiency of his Pharisaical Righteousness, and that he was *so far from Salvation,* that he *persecuted* the *onely Saviour*; after this low Humiliation, how thorowly was his Heart turned to God! how precious was Jesus to his Soul! how circumspectly did he walk! how abundantly did he labour! how patiently and joyfully did he suffer for Righteousnes sake! how constantly did he *keep the Faith, and finish his course,* till he got the *Crown!*

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In true Humiliation there is a mixture of *fear*, and *sorrow*, and *shame*, and upon these does follow holy *anger and indignation*: Look up to Heaven, behold the *great and glorious God against whom* every one of *your* Sins have been committed. Sin is Rebellion and Treason against the King of Glory, 'tis a Transgression of a Law given from Heaven; the breach of which is threatned with not only a temporal Curse, but an eternal Penalty: Well may sin fill you with *fear*.

Let your *Sorrow* express it self freely and abundantly in *remembrance of your evil wayes*. Sin is the *only evil* in Gods eyes, and the *greatest evil* unto you; *hateful* to God, *hurtful* to the Sinner. Every Sin has given you a *Wound*, and as Sins Wounds are the worst, so they should be most grievous: Lament when you see in what a woful plight you are. The sad effects of Sin the whole man over, the Prophet emphatically sets forth, *Isa.* 1. 5, 6. *The whole Head is sick, the whole Heart is faint; from the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, bruises and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with oyntment.*

And should you not be ashamed of your

your own folly in being such enemies to your selves? your Pollutions, your Perdition is really of your selves; *Guilt* should make you blush, and because Sin has *stript you naked* and bare of every thing that's good and beautiful: Oh what a loathsome Leprosie is apparent in all your Parts and Powers! your *foulest spots* are *open* to *Gods eye*, well therefore you may be cover'd with Confusion; and that which still should make you more confounded, is your *base ingratitude*; you have *despised riches of goodness*, you have abused Mercy and Grace, and when a Cure has been offered in the Gospel you *would not be healed*.

Be therefore truly angry at your selves. Let your Indignation and hatred spend it self on your iniquities, be revenged upon them, that they being mortified and *dying*, you may not *dye in* them and *for* them: Humiliation is indeed grievous to Nature, but friendly to Grace. The more Humiliation *Ploughs up the Fallow ground*, the *fruits* of *Righteousness* commonly are brought forth in *greater Plenty*.

4. Study the *mischief which the beloved Sin or Sins have done you*. The *Master Sin* is Gods *Capital Enemy*, and the *chief obstacle* of Conversion; this has the greatest Interest in the Heart, to forsake this

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is indeed moſt difficult, but withall moſt neceſſary. That great Commander *Hannibal*, had more of Enmity againſt the *Romane State*, than a thouſand *ordinary Carthaginians*. He ſtill to his utmoſt endeavour'd to hinder peace with *Rome*, and to bring *Rome* to ruine. The commanding Sin which by reaſon of the Sinners complexion or calling, or other circumſtances, has moſt ſtrength and bears the greateſt ſway; does moſt oppoſe the turning unto God, therefore this muſt in a ſpecial manner be *reſiſted*, *hated*; for *the Life and Strength* of it lies in *the love* of it. Thy Maſter Sin is thy *greateſt tranſgreſſion*, Pſal. 19. 13. and has rendred thee obnoxious to the greateſt Wrath, *this* eſpecially provokes divine jealouſie; *this* has made thee *moſt a ſlave*, and moſt *abominably defiled* thee, *this* is thy ſtrongeſt fetter, and *thy moſt deadly plague*, thy love to it is altogether againſt; thy hatred of it will be with the greateſt reaſon.

The young man in the Goſpel, might have been a Convert, but *Love to his great Poſſeſſions* was the ſin that hindred, *Mat.* 19. 22. He *went away from Chriſt*, he was *too much* taken with worldly Wealth, therefore *not at all taken* with a *Treaſure in Heaven*. *Herod* that did *many things*, might

might have done more; but love to his *Herodias* was his darling Luſt, this made him inſtead of hearkning to *John* the Baptiſt, put him in Priſon, though *John* deſigned *Herods* ſpiritual Liberty and eternal Salvation. Let the proud man hate his Pride, the Covetous man contemn the World which he has made an Idol of, the filthy wretch abhor Fornication and all Uncleanneſs, the unrighteous become juſt, and make Reſtitution of what he has unjuſtly gained. Mortifie all the members of the Body of Sin, but eſpecially conſent, the *right eye* ſhould be *pluckt out*, the *right hand cut off*, and the *very Heart torn out* of that Body.

5. Would you become Converts in Truth, *ſave your ſelves from the Society of evil doers*: The Prophet who tells us, *he turned his Feet unto the Teſtimonies of God*; quickly after adds, *I am become a Companion of them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy Precepts*, Pſal. 119. 63. He that will be a true Convert, and indeed a *bleſſed Man*, he *muſt not walk in the Counſel of the Ungodly, nor ſtand in the way of Sinners, nor ſit in the Seat of the Scornful*, *Pſal.* 1. 1. *David* reſolving to keep the commands of God, abandons that company that were breakers of thoſe commands, and

and were likely to be continually perſwading *him* to tranſgreſs them, *Pſal.* 119. 115. *Depart from me ye evil doers, for I will keep the Commandments of my God*; he is ſo far from approbation, from imitation of them, that he beheld them with *grief* and with *horrour*. It was Counſel given to thoſe that had been prickt at the Heart, and began to turn; *Save your ſelves from this untoward Generation*, Act. 2. 40.

There is a great *Contagion* in Sin, 'tis likened to the *Plague*, to the *Leproſie*, becauſe 'tis ſuch a *deadly*, becauſe 'tis ſuch a *catching diſeaſe*. When we are needleſſly Converſant with them that are dead in Sin, what *deadneſs* do we find ſeizing upon our own Hearts! When we are too intimate with vain Perſons, how does vanity inſinuate it ſelf into our minds, too much eſtranging them from God, and putting them out of a ſerious frame! Carnal Company are a *ſort of Devils in humane ſhape*, that are bound for *Hell themſelves*, and are drawing as *many others* as they can *thither*; they can't be *contented* to *Sin* and be *damn'd alone*: *Have therefore no fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of darkneſs, but rather reprove them*, Eph. 5. 11. Reprove them, becauſe Deſtruction and Miſery is in their wayes, but let not them

them ever perſwade you out of the way of Peace.

And as you are to ſhun the *Profane*, ſo you muſt take heed of being *deaded*, and *diverted* by the *Erroneous*. If Satan cannot draw you back to your former ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs, he will endeavour to *turn* you *aſide* to ſome *falſe and ſtrange Doctrine*, that *this* may take up your *time*, your *thoughts*, your *zeal*; the *Power of Godlineſs*, and *Practical Religion*, being in the mean while *neglected*. When Errour has been embraced, and has corrupted the Mind, and made the Head giddy; 'tis uſual for it, to bring a falſe Peace into the Conſcience, and by *diverting* the Heart to hinder it's *Converting* unto God. Beware, beware of that vain Religion, which is nothing but a kind of *Philoſophy of Opinions*; which is a thing for a wanton fancy to play with, a ſmooth Tongue to talk of: that is made up of *Brain* and *Mouth*, without *Heart* to love, and *Hands* to work for God.

6. If you would be Converts in Truth, *let your Hearts be fill'd with awful apprehenſions of the Majeſty and Holineſs of God*, eſpecially conſidering *he is alwaies by you, and tryes your very Hearts and Reins*. The greatneſs of that God with whom you have

have to do, ſhould make you afraid to dally and trifle with him. If you think *he will be mock't*, you will find to your coſt that you deceive your ſelves: Oh ſtoop with the moſt profound Submiſſion to this glorious Sovereign of Heaven and Earth. 'Tis the heighth of Madneſs for you that are ſo infinitely below Him, and ſo wholly under his Power, to refuſe ſubjection to Him.

He is *Glorious in Holineſs*, Exod. 15. 11. He can as ſoon *ceaſe* to be *himſelf*, as *ceaſe* to be an *Hater of the workers of Iniquity*. A fuller Perſwaſion of Gods *Holineſs*, and that his Holineſs is his *Glory*, will make you more ſenſible of the *Neceſſity* of *turning* from *Sin*, and that Holineſs will be *your Glory* and Perfection: He that is changed and made a Convert, is made a *Glorious Creature*; and as this change is carried on, there is ſtill a Progreſſion from *Glory to Glory by the Spirit of the Lord*, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. Gods *Nature* is *pure*, every *Word* of God is *pure*: He is *Righteous in all his wayes, and Holy in all his Works*, Pſal. 145. 17. Oh cry inceſſantly that you may partake of a *new*, of the *Divine Nature*; that a *clean heart* may be created in you, that your *Lips* may be *Pure*, your Words true and Gracious; and that *you may be*

Holy in all manner of Converſation.

Are not Gods eyes upon your wayes? does not he hear all your words? does not he weigh your very Spirits? your whole man is under *his Obſervation*; let there be a turning to God with your whole man. *Sincerity* in Converſion, and *hypocriſie*, are *both* known; and only Sincerity has Gods *love* and *liking*.

7. When you turn to God *behold him as he is in Chriſt*, elſe there is no acceſs to him, nor acceptance with him. After *Adams* fall the *Mediator is preſently revealed*, the *Seed of the Woman* that *was to break the Serpents head*, Gen. 3. 15. The old Serpent, by Sin had made a Rupture and breach between God and Man; Now Chriſt the Mediatour is He that makes up the breach again, and ſo *deſtroyes the work*, and fruſtrates the deſign of Satan. If God be lookt upon in Chriſt, there is all manner of Encouragement to return to him: *He is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, Heb. 11. 6. *He is good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in Mercy to all that call upon him*, Pſal. 86, 5. The Prodigals Father was not more forward, who *ran* to embrace his returning Son, than *God is to receive* returning Sinners: If you would return to God indeed, you muſt take

take *Calvary* in your way, you muſt *know Jeſus Chriſt and him Crucified*, 1 Cor. 2. 2. The Saints of old that were *in Heaven* before the Son of God was manifeſted in the Fleſh, as well as thoſe that went thither afterward, were all brought *nigh to God by the Blood of his Croſs*, Col. 1. 20.

You cannot *know*, and turn to the *only true God*, ſo as to be received by him, unleſs you know and receive *Jeſus Chriſt whom he has ſent*. But if you behold God in Chriſt, unbelief appears unreaſonable, deſpair is a monſtrous abſurdity: You may perceive Love in the Lords looks, his Juſtice fully ſatisfied, his Anger all gone, his Repentings kindled, his Bowels yearning; and you cannot ſo much *deſire* Mercy, as He *delights* in ſhewing it. The true Convert to God *muſt* be a *Believer* in Jeſus, who is *the way* to the Father: As *God will not* draw nigh to Man, ſo *Man cannot* draw nigh to God any *other way*.

8. With *great earneſtneſs implore the Spirits aid*. Be ſure to grieve that you have grieved Him, and acknowledge 'tis juſt that for your grieving him, he ſhould leave you to your ſelves; but beg his preſence and his aſſiſtance, that *he would*

help you, and make *you truly, constantly willing to be helped.* *Adams* Body was *formed of the Dust* of the Ground, but was a *lifeless Corps*, till God *breathed into it the Breath of Life.* Till the Spirit of Life enters into you, you are without Life or Motion towards God, therefore with all seriousness ask the Spirit: You come to God *through the Son*, as the Mediator that procures access and opens the way, but 'tis *by the Spirit*, as by Him who both inclines and strengthens you to come to Him, *Eph.* 2. 18.

The Promise of the Spirit is of ancient date, implied in the Promise of the *Messiah*, and very frequently expressed: Under the New Testament Dispensation, a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit is Promised. *Parents that are evil*, if their *Children ask bread will not give them a stone* to hurt them, nor instead of a *Fish*, a *Serpent* to sting them: And if they give good gifts to their Children, *much more will the Father in Heaven give his Spirit to them that ask him.* There is hardly a more encouraging Word to Sinners in the whole Bible, if they *are inclined*, or *would be* inclined to have the Spirit given them: And if the Holy Spirit be given you, you will have Light, and Life and Liberty.

Con-

Conviction antecedent to Converſion, *Converſion it ſelf*, and *Conſolation* afterwards, are all of them, the Works of the Spirit.

And be ſure to *obſerve* the *Acceſſes* of the Spirit. Sometimes the *Wind blows fair and ſtrong for Heaven*, now *hoiſe up thy Sail*, that thou mayeſt receive the Gale; ſometimes by his Convictions, motions, ſtrivings, you may perceive the Spirit is very near you; by a *clearer and more affecting Light* he ſhews you, that turning to God is your Duty and Advantage, and he *very much preſſes* you to it.

Nunc ſunt Molliſſima fandi,
Tempora. ——

Now is the time to ſpeak and ſpeed in your Supplications for the Spirit, that he may *thoroughly Convert* you, and *conſecrate* you to the Lord, and *abide in you for ever.*

9. Would you be Converts in Truth, *give your whole Hearts to God, and never be ſatisfied till you feel you love him above all.* Let the Lord have your Hearts to *ſearch* them, that *all*, even the moſt *ſecret evils* there, may be *detected*; and being detected, may be *deteſted* and abhorr'd. Sin

ſometimes may be *reſtrained* from breaking out in the *Life*, and yet then may be *regarded* and *reign* in the *Heart*: Be willing to know the moſt inward ſpiritual wickedneſs, that lies quite out of the ſight of others, and being acquainted with it, conſent to have it purged away. Give your Hearts to God, that he may *poſſeſs*, *employ*, and *rule* them at his Pleaſure: Tell the Lord that the *very Throne* is *for him*, and that your Souls and all that is within you, are ready to be at his command; and that you conſent *every Luſt* ſhould be *ſlain*, becauſe it *would not that he He ſhould reign over you.*

In what a *ſafe hand* is the *Heart*, when 'tis in Gods? how pure and excellent is it made? with what Beauty does it ſhine? To turn with the *whole Heart*, is for the *whole* to *turn excellent*, for the *whole* to be *ſecured.*

Be never ſatisfied, till you perceive that God has *your love*, which is indeed the *leading* and *commanding Affection.* If Sin, if Mammons Pleaſures and Wealth have ſtill your love, your profeſſing your ſelves Converts, is all but *feigned kindneſs*, and you *provoke the Lord to jealouſie.* Give unto God your *Love* which he *calls for*, in the *firſt* and *great* Commandment; or elſe

elſe you give him *nothing*: if your love be given him, you will not *deny* him *any thing*. And if as yet you can't ſhew your love by *delighting* in God, becauſe of your doubts, and the darkneſs of your ſtate; ſhew your love by *deſiring* after God, whoſe *loving kindneſs is better than Life*; whoſe *Allſufficiency* is *enough and enough*, and infinitely *more* than *enough* for you.

But here's the difficulty. How ſhall the *Heart* of Man be *brought* unto the *love* of God? The Stream of the affections runs *naturally* and *violently downwards*; and how ſhall the *tide* be *turned*? how ſhall the love be carried quite *contrary* to the *bent* of Nature? Certainly this muſt be the *doing* of the *God of all Grace*. The Apoſtle prayes for the *Theſſalonians*, that the *Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God*, 2 Theſ. 3. 5. Put up this Petition for your ſelves. 'Tis an encouraging Scripture, *Deut.* 30. 6. *The Lord thy God will circumciſe thy heart to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy Soul, that thou mayeſt live*; apply it, improve it; and if you *grudge* your love to *every thing* elſe, and are *continually offering* it to God; and above *all* things in the World, deſire to *love him*, and to be *beloved of him*; Love is already wrought, the

acts of it appear; and you ſhall by degrees *love* more *ſenſibly*; and the *ſtronger* the *love*, the more *ſound* the *Converſion*.

10. Deceive not your ſelves with *faint wiſhes, and half-willingneſs to be Converted*. I grant that the deſire of Grace, is Grace; but if there be not *Truth* in the *deſire*, the *Truth* of *Grace* can't be concluded from it: A lazy wiſh to be Converted, where there is a prevailing reſolution to connive at and continue in Sin, what does it ſignifie but that the Heart is not right with God, notwithſtanding ſome feeble good inclinations towards him? Our Lord commands his Followers to *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate*, becauſe *many ſhall ſeek to enter in and ſhall not be able*, Luk. 13. 24. Many hereafter ſhall ſeek and expect admiſſion into Heaven, who ſhall be excluded becauſe they would not ſtrive, they would not uſe an *holy violence* to take that Kingdom.

Many over haſtily conclude they are Converted, becauſe there is ſome *little inclination* to what is *good*, though a *ſtronger inclination* to what is *evil*, without check does bear the ſway in them. In *ſpiritual*, as well as *natural lukewarmneſs*, there is *ſome* mixture of *heat*, as well as a *prevalency* of *cold*: Can water be called hot,

hot, where heat is leaſt, and cold is moſt? Can the Heart be ſaid to be turned to God, which is leaſt inclined towards him, and moſt ſtrongly and reſolvedly bent towards Sin and Vanity? Oh, take heed of Sloth and Idleneſs! Sloth is that which has brought many a Conviction to nothing, you can hardly name a greater Impediment of Converſion: Upon thouſands of Profeſſors *Tombs* this may be written, *Here lye thoſe who have undone themſelves by Slothfulneſs, and miſs'd of Grace and Glory, becauſe they would take Pains for neither.*

If you would be Converts indeed, abandon Idleneſs; let your very Hearts be in every Duty, your Souls and the ſtrength of them, the fervency of your Spirits in every Ordinance of God, *Rom.* 12. 11. *Not ſlothful in buſineſs*; eſpecially not in the main buſineſs, *ſervent in Spirit, ſerving the Lord.* Satisfie not your ſelves in a cuſtomary and formal uſing of the means of Grace, but look to this, that life, and warmth, and ſtrength, and Grace be indeed conveyed to you in them.

11. Would you be Converts indeed, *look much into another World*; confine not your ſight and thoughts to the things of time and ſenſe, but take the *Perſpective* of the Word of God, that to the eye of your Faith,

things

things unſeen may become evident, Heb. 11. 1. Time is ſo ſhort a thing, that you may eaſily and quickly ſee to the end of it; and yet concerning this ſhort Time, it may be ſaid, that *Now* you muſt be turn'd or *Never*: At the end of Time *Death* ſtands, thouſands feel his ſtroke every day, before your eyes, and how ſoon may *you* feel his deadly Dart, and return to the duſt out of which we were all taken! where's the Man that upon good ground can ſay, *He is ſure to live a Year, a Month, a Week, a Day to an end?* Juſt behind Death is *Judgment*; and at the Bar of God, who will *bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and make manifeſt the Counſels of the Heart*, what will a *ſhew* of Grace and of Converſion ſignifie?

At that Bar all the Children of Men muſt receive their final and unalterable Doom: from that Tribunal there can be no Appeal to another; there is no higher Judge than he who ſhall *judge the quick and the dead, at his Appearing and his Kingdom*, 2 Tim. 4. 1. The Sentence which he will Pronounce, will ſtand good and firm for ever; and 'twill be a Sentence either to *eternal Glory* or *everlaſting Flames*: And know, that *Converſion now* will make the *Diſcrimination then*; only Converts will ſtand in

in Judgment, only those that sincerely turn'd to God in this World, will be received into his Joy and Kingdom in the other World. But as for the Unconverted who would not turn from Sin, they shall without any Pity, or hopes of any, according as they were threatned, and have justly deserved, be *turned into Hell*, and there will be no remedy.

You are all posting away from hence, and shall shortly *hear the Word*, and be *seen your selves* no more. A serious belief and consideration of the *eternal Joyes* and *eternal Woes* of *another World*, would have a mighty Influence upon the very worst of you, to make you of *another*, of a *better Mind*.

USE VI. Of *Consolation* unto *Converts*. There is a Consolation that has a Woe joyn'd with it, *Woe to you rich Men, for ye have received your Consolation*. The Wicked and the Hypocrite have their Peace and Joy, but their Peace is false, and their Joy but for a moment; but the Converts Comfort is styled both *strong* and *everlasting Consolation*.

Here I shall first give you the Converts *Character*, and then lay down the Grounds of his Comfort; and indeed true Com-

fort

sort belongs to none in the World but true Converts.

Though I have spoken a great deal already, to shew who are Converted, yet I shall add these Signs following.

1. Converts *chuse God for their Portion, rather than the World:* Thou art *my Portion, O Lord, I have said I will keep thy Word*; this was a Converts Language, *Psal.* 119. 57. So *Lam.* 3. 24. *The Lord is my Portion, saith my Soul, therefore will I hope in him.* A Converted Soul cannot be satiated with Vanity, no sufficiency is enough for it but Gods Alsufficiency.

2. Converts *chuse Christ for their Ruler, rather than Sin*; they are weary of *Sins Dominion*, as well as afraid of its *Damnation*, and they consent that Sin should no longer reign in them; but they are *willing* to be the Lords *in the day of his Power*, *Psal.* 110. 3. they yield hearty Obedience to his Commands, and are sorry they can't, and wish they *could* yield better. When God *Commanded* to have his *Precepts kept diligently*, 'twas the Heart of a Convert that eccho'd to his Voice, *Oh that my wayes were directed to keep thy Statutes!* Psal. 119. 4, 5.

3. Converts *chuse Saints for their Companions, rather than the Wicked: David* though

though a King, counted the *Saints the most excellent ones upon Earth*, Pſal. 16. 3. and his *Delight* being in them, it argued he himſelf was *ſanctified*, and that he was *good* as well as *great*: But know, 'tis *one thing* to love a Saint becauſe *good Natur'd*, becauſe *Learned*, becauſe *Prudent and Ingenious*, becauſe of *our Perſwaſion*, becauſe *ſerviceable* to our *Carnal Intereſt*; and *another* thing to love and like the Holineſs and Image of God in him: If thus we do, we ſhall be glad of the Grace in him, though 'tis more than in our ſelves; and the more faithfully he reproves us for our ſin, and endeavours to promote Holineſs in us, we ſhall ſtill like him ſo much the better.

4. Converts *chuſe good Works and Duties for their employment, rather than the unfruitful VVorks of darkneſs*; and they had rather have a Treaſure in Heaven, than the greateſt riches of this World; they prefer *Heaven* not only before *Hell*, but before *Earth*, and all the Wealth, Pleaſure and Glory of it; and *ſowe* not to the *Fleſh*, but to the *Spirit*, that of the *Spirit they may reap Life everlaſting*, Gal. 6. 8.

Theſe in ſhort are the Characters of Converts; the Grounds of their *Comfort* are theſe.

1. When

1. When any are truly Converted, *God's eternal good will and purpose of Grace breaks forth*, and he is savingly wrought on, *who was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the World, that he should be holy*, Eph. 1. 4. The Apostle speaking of those that are effectually Called and Converted, he looks both into the *Eternity before* the World, and into the *Eternity after* it, and concludes that these Called ones, they were *predestinated* to Life and Salvation *from everlasting*, and *to everlasting* they will be *glorified*, Rom. 8. 30. Converts in time, have been in Gods thoughts from Eternity, and in Conversion his Electing Love breaks forth, which was in his Heart ever of old, before the World began: And Converts may conclude, that a Love which *from an whole Eternity* was thus *fixt* and *settled* upon them, *in time* shall *never change*. Though the dispensations of his Providence may vary, some being more *sweet*, and some more *smarting*, like Checquer-work black and white in the same Table, yet God and his Love are still the same. Though there is a *vicissitude* between *Day* and *Night*, between *Summer* and *Winter*, yet the *God of Nature* changes not, and the *God of Grace* is *Immutable*, and his *Heart* is still on Converts, though they some-

ſometimes *walk in Darkneſs*, and ſee not the *Light* of his bleſſed *Countenance*.

2. Converts are *wiſe Builders, for they have a ſure foundation, and ſhall never be confounded.* The *Blood* of Jeſus, which is the Blood of *God*, and the *riches of the Grace* of God in him, are the foundation of their Faith and Hope: *Chriſt* is the *Rock* upon which the Church, and every true Member of it, is built; and thoſe who while Militant, are thus fortified and ſecured, ſhall certainly at laſt triumph over the World and Sin, and *the gates of Hell*: The Convert has *caſt anchor within the Vail*, Heb. 6. 19. Chriſt is *his Hope*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 1. His Hope of Pardon, and ſufficient Grace, and future Glory. If Chriſt *were not*, or were not *his*, he would be *all Deſpair*; but Chriſt having done and ſuffer'd, and Purchaſed both him and ſo much for him, he *does abound in Hope*, by the Power of the Holy Ghoſt.

The Converts Hope diſtinguiſhes it ſelf from the preſumptuous Expectation of the Hypocrite; for when he *Hopes for Salvation*, he *keeps the Commands of God*, Pſal. 119. 166. In this ſenſe he is a wiſe Builder, for his Faith is *effectual* to good Works, his Hope makes *him patiently continue in well doing*: Thoſe words are very encouraging

raging to the obedient Convert, *Mat.* 7. 24, 25. *Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his House upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.* They build well and wisely indeed, *who lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life*, 1 Tim. 6. 19.

3. Converts are made *better by the good things* of this World, and *the evils* they meet with *work together for their good*, *Rom.* 8. 28. If they *have the Creatures* in some Plenty and abundance, they have *God with them*; if they are deprived of them, they have *God without them*, and so are still *well*, and have enough in him. No dispensations fall wrong to the Convert, he can fly with any wings, he can sail with any wind; nay, *under water* he can *live*, and *dive*, and *swim* towards *Heaven*, which is indeed Καλὸς Λιμὴν, the *Fair Haven*: The more of this Worlds goods he has, the *more good* he is forward to *do*; and if these are taken away, the *more Grace* and *Peace* from God he is *desirous*, and being desirous, he is *sure to receive*.

4. Converts have *the Ordinances of God*;

and

and the means of Grace blessed to them. The *Word* is the *savour of Life unto Life* unto them, 2 *Cor.* 2. 16. The *Prayers* they send to Heaven, come back again with *rich returns* of *Mercy and Grace*: Sacrament dayes are dayes of *Strength*, and oftentimes of *Solace*; and not only *Christ* and his *Present* Benefits are exhibited to them, but an *Eternal Inheritance* is also *made over*, under the *broad Seal* of Heaven, and themselves are *Sealed by the Spirit unto the day of Redemption*, Eph. 5. 30. *David* that reaped *Benefit* by Ordinances, pronounces the *Tabernacles of God amiable*, Psal. 84. 1. *A day in his Courts better than a thousand.* It was the *one thing* he desired, that he *might dwell in the House of the Lord all the dayes of his Life*, that he might *see his Beauty, Power and Glory*, and *taste his goodness* there. That Noble Marquess, *Galeazeus Caracciolus*, need not have been *present* at a *false worship*; he might have had the *Liberty* of Religion in his *Closet*, yet he left all, that he might enjoy *pure publick Ordinances*: Certainly he found that of *Grace*, that of *Christ* in them, as was much more valuable to him than all his *Pleasant and Plentiful Estate*, which is one of the *chief Flowers* in *Italy*, the *Garden of the World.*

5. God is *turned unto theſe true Converts that are turned to him*; and will *never turn away from them to do them good*, and to *keep them good*, and upright before Him. Regeneration and Converſion is a great Fruit and effect of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, 1 *Pet.* 1. 3. Believers are ſaid to be *begotten again to a lively hope by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead.* And as Chriſt *being raiſed from the dead dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him*, Rom. 6. 9. ſo they who by Converting Grace are made ſpiritually alive, ſhall never totally relapſe under the Dominion of Sin, nor become again dead in Treſpaſſes. That God who has *called* theſe Converts is *faithful*, and therefore, as the Apoſtle ſayes, *he will preſerve their whole Spirits and Souls and Bodies blameleſs unto the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, 1 Theſ. 5. 23, 24. The Lord turns to them that are turned, *Zech.* 1. 3. *Turn to me, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, and I will turn to you, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts:* he turns his *Eye*, his *Face*, his *Ear*, his *Heart*, his *Hand* towards them *for good*. And he has ſaid he *will never leave them nor forſake them*, neither ſhall *they leave* nor *forſake him*; for he will eſtabliſh them with his *Free Spirit*, he will *uphold them with the right hand*

hand of his Righteousneſs. Oh Happy Converts, who have *Glory* promiſed upon their Perſeverance! and have *Strengthning Grace* Promiſed to make them perſevere unto the end!

6. Converſion will *end in Coronation.* All Converts are by Adoption the *Children* of *God, heirs* of his *Kingdom*, and ſhall *for ever wear a Crown of Life.* Though the Heathens knew ſomething of future Rewards and Puniſhments, yet their Apprehenſions of theſe were low and unſuitable.

Τὶς οἶδεν εἰ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἐστὶ κατθανεῖν,
Τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν.

Who knows, ſaies *Euripides,* whether *to live be not to dye, and to dye be not to live?*

He ſeems to gueſs there was a better Life after this; yet he is not certain of it: When *Ulyſſes* imagined *Achilles* the braveſt among the *Greeks,* to have been moſt happy after Death. *Homer* Odyſſ. *l.* 11. brings in *Achilles* appearing to him, and ſaying,

Βυλοίμην κ' ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλῳ,
Ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀκλήρῳ ᾧ μὴ βίοτος πολὺς εἴη,
Ἢ πᾶσι νεκύεσσι κατηφιόωσιν ἀνάσσειν.

Which may be thus Englished,

I'd rather serve a Clown on Earth for bread,
Than in those Regions of the Dead
Command, and be of all the supream Head.

Heaven is here set forth as a poor and undesirable thing: But *Life and Immortality is brought to light by the Gospel*, 2 Tim. 1. 10. Here the Glory of the other World is displayed; here is an excellent Map of the heavenly and everlasting Kingdom, where Knowledge and Light is compleat without Darkness, Holiness perfect without the least remainder of Defilement, Blessedness and Joy is full without any Grief, or Fear, or Possibility of Sorrow; where there is no such thing as Sin, or Death, or Trouble, but God himself *is All in All*, 1 Cor. 15. 28.

All Converts, their Feet are turned into the way to Heaven, their Hearts are now set upon it, it won't be long e're they be there, and Crown'd there themselves. Conversion is called a *Rising from the Dead*, *Eph.* 5. 14. for it has some likeness to, and is an earnest of a future glorious Resurrection: What a *glorious Creature* will the *Convert* be, when *Christ* has done his *whole Work upon him*, and has put to him *his last*

laſt hand, in making his *whole Man every way perfect*! Glorified *Bodies* will ſhine as the *Sun*, glorified *Souls* will be pure and ſpotleſs like the *Seraphim*, and Wonder, Love, Joy and Praiſe, will be in Heaven the everlaſting buſineſs. I have ſpoken much to Comfort Converts, but no Tongue can tell the thouſandth part of *all* their Happineſs: The *Heart* of Man is too *narrow* at preſent, to *comprehend* what *God has prepared for them that Love him*, 1 Cor. 2. 9.

USE VII. Of *Counſel* unto them that are Converted; and my Advice ſhall be in theſe particulars.

1. Thankfully *admire the Grace of God* which has Converted you: The *beſt* thing in *this World*, which is *Grace*, and *Glory* in the *World to come*, certainly do well *deſerve* your thanks. Sin has made you *leſs than the leaſt of Mercies*, by Converſion you come to partake of the *greateſt*: Chriſt is formed in you, and you are made New Creatures, that a New Song ſhould be in your Mouths, and that you ſhould *ſhew forth the Praiſes of him who has called you out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. 2. 9. Let every Convert admire, and admiring, Praiſe, and ſay, *How much*

much has God done for me! and how has he done that for *me*, which he has not done for *thouſands* and *millions* in the *World*, in the very *Church*, who are *let alone* to live and dye in Sin, and to damn themſelves for ever!

2. Labour to be *more thoroughly Converted*; Pray for this, that God would ſtill turn you more and more unto himſelf; follow on to know him, follow harder after him, and ſtrive ſtill more to pleaſe him; 1 *Theſ.* 4. 1. *Furthermore then we beſeech you Brethren, and exhort you by our Lord Jeſus, that as ye have received, how ye ought to walk and to pleaſe God, ſo ye would abound more and more:* The more fully you turn, the more you pleaſe him, and to pleaſe him will be pleaſant to you: The nearer you come to God, the ſafer you will be under his ſhadow, the more evidently will you ſee, and the more abundantly will you taſte his goodneſs.

3. Do nothing *unbecoming Converts:* Think often with your ſelves *whoſe* you are, and what a Price was pay'd to *redeem you from all Iniquity*, and to make you *Zealous of good works*, Tit. 2. 14. Reckon it *bruitiſh* to be Intemperate and Unclean, *baſe* to be Covetous, and Earthly-minded, *helliſh* to be Malicious, Envious and Proud. Be Patient

Patient under Gods Corrections, under Injuries from Man: Let your Tongues be true and kind, your Hands merciful and juſt, in your Morals be of great exactneſs: Divine Morality! without thee Religion is a vain ſhew, holy Duties are but loſt labour, and Confidence that all is well is but ſelf-deceiving: What *Brutus* ſaid of *Vertue*, may be uſed concerning Faith, *O miſerable Faith, without moral Honeſty thou art nothing elſe but an empty Name!* Take heed of falls, eſpecially great ones, after Converſion, leaſt you wound both Conſcience and Religion, and go ſmarting and groaning to your Graves.

4. Pity the *Unconverted about you*: Miſery moves Bowels, and ſtirs up Mercy; who more miſerable than Sinners, who are at a diſtance from God, and under his Wrath; and who are ſo far from fearing and turning, that they are ſtill running farther from him, and provoking him to fiercer indignation? Compaſſionate theſe, Counſel theſe, Pray for theſe, and endeavour, though they are and will be *without the Word*, to *win them* by a wiſely expreſſed *Love*, and by a *well-ordered Converſation*, 1 Pet. 3. 1. Let not your Bowels be ſtraitned, but Pray for the *Worlds* Converſion to God, that he would return to

this Earth, which for Sin he has ſo juſtly forſaken, and that he would *turn the World* into a *New One*, wherein *may dwell Righteouſneſs*.

5. Be ſure *to Love all true Converts*: Love them all, becauſe *God loves* them, and love *what you ſee of God* in them: The Image of God is ſo excellent, that in whomſoever it ſhines, it ought with pure affection to be owned and reſpected. Converts I grant may *differ* in many things, but they *agree in the main*; all of them *believe in Jeſus*, all of them *turn to God*, all of them endeavour to *Glorifie him* here on Earth, and all of them are *bound for Heaven*: And *Univerſal Agreement* thus far, is a ſtrong reaſon for *Catholick and Univerſal Charity*. All Converts, of *what Perſwaſion* ſoever, of what *Nation* ſoever, of what *Rank* and *Condition* ſoever in this World; they are all adopted by *one Father*, all redeemed by *one Chriſt Jeſus*, all eſpouſed to *one Husband*, all members of *one Body*, all enlivened by *one Spirit*, and ſhall all meet at laſt in *one Heaven*, where they ſhall perfectly be joyned together in Union and in Love; and this ſhould ſtrongly move and perſwade unto Unity and Love at preſent.

6. Laſtly, (and ſo I conclude this Doctrine,)

ſtrine,) you that are Coverts, *ſee that you abide with God, and be ſtedfaſt in his Covenant*; they that *totally*, and *finally depart* from God, never were *totally* and *fully turned* to him. Let your Perſeverance be an evident Demonſtration, to prove the truth of your Converſation; let not the *hardeſt labour*, the *hotteſt ſervice*, that you may be put upon, the *greateſt ſufferings* that you may be expoſed to, in the *leaſt diſcourage* you, for God doth not require that you ſhould do, or that you ſhould ſuffer any thing for him, but only *by the ſtrength* that he himſelf hath promiſed, and doth intend to give. All you Converts have *done well* in turning to God, *do better* in following hard after him; and *beſt of all* in finiſhing your courſe, that you may get the Crown of Righteouſneſs.

To conclude, Let your *Faith* be firm, like to the *Rock* it is founded upon; let your *hope* be ſtedfaſt. Be *rooted, and grounded in your love*; and let your hearts be ſo *united to fear the name of God*, Pſal. 86. 11. that it may be as poſſible to *hinder the Sun* from riſing, as to hinder you from *ſhining like lights in the World*. That it may be as poſſible to cauſe the *Moon and Stars* to ceaſe their wonted courſes, as to turn you

you out of the way of Truth and Holiness. That it may be as possible to alter the Ordinances of Heaven, as to make you neglect Heaven, and become again earthly-minded.

Thus have I done with the first Doctrine, that I raised from the words, which I have been large upon: *That Conversion, is of absolute necessity, and the great thing that God requires of Man.*

Doct. 2. I proceed unto the second Doctrine, that I raised from the words, and that is this. *Conversion is then sincere, when the soul is Converted.*

The *Soul* of Man is the chief subject of Sin. It is the Soul that uses, or rather abuses the members of the Body, as Instruments of Unrighteousness. The Beasts that have no rational Soul, are not capable of committing Iniquity; and as the Soul is the chief subject of Sin, so it is the chief subject of *Converting Grace*; if this be not turned, really there is no true turning unto God. God is a *Spirit*, and he *weighs the Spirits of Men*; and he doth chiefly *require the Heart and Spirit*, Prov. 23. 26. and accordingly the Convert with *David* sayes, *Psal.* 25. 1. *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my Soul.* And Psal. 119. 129.

129. *Thy Teſtimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my Soul keep them.*

In the handling this Doctrine,

1. I am to ſhew you, when the *Soul* may be ſaid to be *Converted.*

2. To prove, that till the Soul is Converted; *Converſion is not ſincere.*

3. To demonſtrate the *neceſſity of turning* to God with the *very Soul.*

And then in the laſt place, *to make application.*

1. I am to tell you, when *the Soul* may be ſaid *truly to be Converted*; the opening of this, is the chief thing that I deſign in this Doctrine.

1. When the Soul is Converted, there is *a marvellous Light that ſhines into the Mind.* The Tree of *Knowledge* was ſo called, becauſe it was a Tree of *Tryal*; whether Man would perſevere in goodneſs; or whether he would be tempted, and *drawn away to evil:* but when this Tree was once taſted, Man preſently *fell under the power of darkneſs.* The eyes of all underſtandings are blind, *till enlightned by the Spirit of wiſdom and revelation,* Eph. 1. 17, 18. All the Stars that are in the Firmament, cannot make day without the Sun; and all the works that God hath wrought, all the words that he hath ſpoken, cannot of them-

themſelves enlighten the mind of Man without the Spirit of God. It is *He* that takes off the Vail, and cauſes the Light to ſhine upon, and into the very Soul.

This Light *makes things manifeſt*, Eph. 5. 13. *For all things that are reproved are made manifeſt by the light, for whatſoever doth make manifeſt is light.* This Light that ſhines into a Converted Soul, doth diſcover *Sin*; it ſhews the filth, the ſpots, the ſting, the poyſon, the death, the wrath, the Hell, that is in Sin, or is annexed to it. It doth diſcover the deceitfulneſs of Sin, in hiding its own bad nature, and the dreadful conſequences that follow upon it.

And as this Light doth make ſin manifeſt, ſo it doth diſcover *Chriſt* too; the ſufficiency of his juſtifying Righteouſneſs, the excellency of his ſanctifying Grace: and how to turn to God, is, of miſerable to become truly bleſſed.

This Light alſo is *directing*. It directs what Converts muſt do that they may be ſaved. It ſhews them the End, and the proper Means for the attaining of that End. It leads them out of the broad way, and from all the ſnares, and ſtumbling-blocks, and the precipices that are there; and

and it leads them into *the way that is everlasting*, Psal. 139. *ult.*

Finally, This Light that shines into the Converted Soul, hath *Heat and Influence*; like the Light of the Sun in the Spring-season, that causeth the Trees and Plants to be flourishing, and to be fruitful. The Light of the Converts, hath a mighty influence upon them. The things that are *freely given of God*, are *so* seen, as that the heart is taken with them, as the *principal things* of all; and undervalues other things in comparison of those. Thus the *wise Merchant* that sought *goodly Pearls*, when he had found *one Pearl of great price*, he *went and sold all that he had, and bought it*, Matth. 13. 46.

2. When the Soul is Converted, the *Judgment is rectified.* The Judgment of the natural Man is wofully perverted. He judges aright of nothing, he judges amiss of every thing: *Wo* to him, he *calls evil good, and good evil*; *he puts darkness for Light, and Light for darkness*; *bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter*; as the Prophet speaks, *Isa.* 5. 20. The *Wisdom* of God he calls by the Name of *foolishness*, and the *folly* of the *World*, he will needs have to be the *shrewdest and best sort of wisdom.* He *errs* on *both hands*, valuing what is vile,

vile, and ſleighting what is excellent.

But the Apoſtle in 1 *Cor.* 2. 15. telleth us, That he that is *ſpiritual judgeth all things, yet he himſelf is judged of no Man.* The Convert hath a faculty of *ſpiritual diſcerning*, and can paſs a right judgment upon things. One Angel can ſee another, though the bodily Eye can ſee neither. One that is a Convert, having a ſpiritual faculty of diſcerning, can ſee the excellency of ſpiritual things, which the natural Man cannot behold. And when it is ſaid, that the Spiritual *Man is judged of no Man*, the meaning is this; that no natural Man is a *competent judge* concerning him. Cenſure him, he may; as if he were regardleſs of, and *beſide* himſelf, but really this Cenſure is without reaſon. Not judging, but miſsjudging this is to be called.

The Converts judgment is very ſound, he takes the right ballance, even thoſe of the Sanctuary, to weigh all things in. He compares *God* and the *Creature* together, the *righteouſneſs and ſtrength* of Man, and the *righteouſneſs and ſtrength* of Chriſt together; things *temporal*, and things *eternal* together; and weighing theſe things together, the difference between them is apparent. He writes *Tekel* upon what is *Mammons*, and upon what is *Mans*; and the weight-

weightieſt and moſt excellent things he doth approve as ſuch; eſpecially a far *more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

And as the Converts Judgment is ſound, ſo let me tell you, it is *very grave and ſerious*, in propounding what is good unto the *Will*. It is deliberate in its *determination* what is good; and then with greateſt evidence and ſtrength of Reaſon, nay, with Demonſtration of the Spirit, it urges the Soul, that this which is ſo good may be followed and embraced. My beloved, a Judgment thus rectified, and *ſet right*, it is one of the *greateſt Bleſſings* from Heaven, and comes down *from the Father of Lights*, who manifeſts himſelf to be the *Father of Mercies* in beſtowing ſuch a Gift. Now the Soul is Light when the Judgment is rectified, and the whole Man is under better conduct; and this Light proves Armour and Defence againſt the *Works of Darkneſs*: *Rom.* 13. 12, 13, 14. *Let us caſt off the works of darkneſs, and put on the armour of light: Let us walk honeſtly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and make not proviſion for the fleſh to fulfill the luſts thereof.*

3. When

3. When the Soul is converted, the *Conscience is made very faithful, and very tender.* The Soul of Man is endued with a Power of Self-reflection; it can with a great deal of delight take notice of what *of God*, and what *of good* is in it self; and it can terribly *recoyl* upon it self, and prove a self-punisher, at the commission of what is *evil.* The Conscience of an unconverted Sinner, is usually in a dead sleep. How many sleepy Consciences are here, God awaken them to day: Usually the Conscience of an unconverted Sinner is in a dead sleep. He takes little or no notice at all of that God that is by him, of his Presence, of the Purity of his Law, and of the Sinners obligation to obey it. And Conscience being thus asleep, *talks in its sleep*; and what doth it talk? in its sleep it doth *say*, *Peace*, and it doth *dream of Safety*; and thus it goes on crying Peace, and dreaming of Safety, untill *suddain destruction* doth *prove* that Peace and that Safety to be nothing else but a meer *delusion.* 1 *Thess.* 5. 3. *When men shall say, Peace and Safety, then suddain destruction cometh upon them as travel upon a woman with Child, and they shall not escape.*

But the Convert, his Conscience is awakened; it is awakened so thoroughly, that it keeps more or less *awake ever after.*

The

The Conſcience doth *underſtand* the *Authority* that it hath *from* God.

And it doth *improve* that Authority *for* God.

The Conſcience of a Convert doth *underſtand* the Authority that it hath *from* God. The God of Heaven hath allowed the Conſcience a *Negative Voice*. To ſin contrary to the Light, and to the Dictates of Conſcience, it is to ſin with a great Aggravation, and it is to incurr great danger. 1 *Joh.* 3. 20. *If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things.* Nay, ſuppoſing that Conſcience doth but *doubt* concerning an Action, that Action muſt not be ventured upon untill Conſcience be *fully ſatisfied* about it, *Rom.* 14. *ult. He that doubts* of the lawfulneſs of a Meat, is damned if he eats, becauſe *he eateth not of Faith*; that is, being not fully perſwaded of the lawfulneſs of what he eats; he eats not of Faith, and that which is *not of Faith, is ſin.*

And as Conſcience knows the Authority it hath of God, ſo it doth *improve* and exerciſe this Authority that it hath from God, for Him. The Converts Conſcience urges that the Will of God may be done ſtill, tho' it never ſo much thwarts the inclination and grain of mans; it urges that God may

be alwayes pleaſed, whoever is offended, and herein it does conſult the Converts trueſt Intereſt. The ſharper the Sight, the clearer the Light, the greater the force of Conſcience is, there will be a departing from evil with the greater fear, and care, and hatred, and there will be a doing of good with the greater diligence, exactneſs and perſeverance; and all this is for the good of Converts in more Worlds than one. *Pſal.* 37. 27. *Depart from evil, and do good, and dwell for evermore.*

4. When the Soul is Converted, *the Thoughts have not a lawleſs Liberty allowed them, but there is a Conflict with them, and great care to govern them well.* The Mind of Man is a buſie and an Active thing, thoughts are continually iſſuing from it, as Sparks from a Furnace, or Waters from a Fountain; and naturally *all* theſe are *evil*, *Gen.* 6. 5. *God ſaw that the wickedneſs of Man was great upon the Earth, and every Imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* When the Soul is converted, the nature of the Thoughts is changed; *vain and ſinful thoughts* preſently become *burthenſome.* The Heart is made *new*, and a *new heart* will have *new kind* of *thoughts.* The thoughts will be pure and clean, if the Heart be ſanctified and cleanſed. *Jeruſalem* did

did ſhew her ſelf a Stranger to Converſion, that ſhe was ſtill indeed in her wickedneſs, as long as ſinful and vain thoughts had entertainment given to them; *Jer.* 4. 14. *O Jeruſalem, waſh thine heart from wickedneſs, that thou mayeſt be ſaved, how long ſhall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?*

A converted Soul may be likened unto a Houſe that formerly had very bad, but now hath other and better Inhabitants. The Hectors, the Ranters, the Swearers, the Whoremongers, the Drunkards; they come and knock at the Door of this Houſe, and ſay, that *formerly none were more welcome there than themſelves*; but the door is kept faſt lockt, bolted, barr'd againſt them; and the anſwer is, that there is no room for ſuch as they. The Houſe hath now another owner, that don't like ſuch company, but another, a better ſort of Society. Thus it is with the Heart of the Convert; proud, luſtfull, covetous, malicious, revengefull thoughts *plead* for *admiſſion*; and ſay *we uſed to be very welcome*, and formerly there was a great deal of pleaſure, and delight taken *in us*, and muſt we now be turned out of doors? The anſwer is, the Heart hath another *Inhabitant*: Sin dwelt there before, and then ſinful thoughts were welcom thoughts; Ay, but now Grace *reigns there*, therefore

theſe ſinful Thoughts as faſt as they endeavour to Croud in, there are endeavours uſed to extrude them.

And as ſinful thoughts are burthenſome to a Converted Soul, ſo *good thoughts* are *welcome gueſts.*

Indulge Hoſpitio cauſaſque innecte morandi.

A Converted Soul Indulges to ſuch Thoughts, and earneſtly deſires their conſtant abode and ſtay. The Convert is truly troubled that he can *hardly joyn three or four good thoughts together without ſome Interruption:* The Convert wiſhes, that God were more, and with more delight his Meditation; and that his Law were meditated on, and delighted in as well as himſelf. Saith *David,* Pſal. 104. 34. *My Meditation of him ſhall be ſweet, I will be glad in the Lord.* And in *Pſal.* 1. 2. It is ſaid of the bleſſed man, *His delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate day and Night.* And the Convert whoſe Soul is indeed turned unto God, he ſpeaks thus; ſuch and ſo delightful let my thoughts ever be.

5. When the Soul is Converted there is *a Conformity of the Will of man, unto the Holy and bleſſed Will of God.* This was the

the ground of the *first controverſie* between the Lord and thoſe *Angels* that revolted from him; they would needs *oppoſe their wills* to his: God would have them to keep *humble*, their Wills were to become *proud*, and pride was both the *fault* and *fall* of the *Devil* and his *Followers*, 1 Tim. 3. 6. *Not a Novice, leſt being lifted up with Pride, he fall into the Condemnation of the Devil.* God would have theſe Angels to abide *in Truth*, but their *will* was to let go *their Primitive Integrity*, and they turned falſe and rebellious Spirits: And the *natural man* is too much like theſe *evil Angels*. God calls, but man will not hear; God commands, but man will not obey; and in ſome ſort evil men *out-do* the Apoſtate Angels; becauſe when God doth offer to *ſanctifie*, and to *cure*, and to *ſave* the Children of men, they *chuſe death* and *damning*, rather than they will *conſent* to be healed. But when the Soul is Converted, the *Will* is changed; and indeed the great *turning change* is *here*: In the Will of man there is the great turning change wrought; as long as *that* remains *perverſe*, and ſtubborn, and refractory, to be ſure there is nothing of Converting Grace; and when once the *Will* is changed, and *ſet right*, and *inclined ſteddily* to-

wards God, all *remaining infirmities* and the *Truth of Grace*, may very well ſtand together.

There are theſe three things that the Will of the Convert doth.

1. It doth *make choice* of that which God propounds as moſt *eligible*.

2. It is *Subject unto Gods Laws*, and Commandments.

3. It *ſubmits to Correction and the Croſs*.

1. The Will of the Convert makes choice of that which God propounds as moſt eligible; and above all it makes choice of *God himſelf*. It is taken with the exceeding *Riches of his Grace*: It is taken with *his Wiſdom, Truth, Faithfulneſs; All-ſufficiency, Unchangeableneſs*, and *Eternity*. To enjoy the higheſt and chiefeſt good, and to enjoy this good for ever, and for ever: What is *more*, what is *ſo* worthy to be choſen? The bent of *Davids* Will was thus towards God when he ſaid, *Pſal.* 42. 2. *My Soul thirſteth for God, for the living God, when ſhall I come and appear before God?* and though *David* was advanced to a *Throne*, yet that doth not *divert* him from ſeeking after God, and ſaying to him, *O when wilt thou come to me!* Pſal. 101. 2. *I will behave my ſelf wiſely, in a perfect way, O when wilt thou come to me!*

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I will walk within my houſe with a perfect Heart. Though my Houſe be a Palace, and though my Chair be a Throne; I ſhall be uneaſie in my Seat, I ſhall look upon my Crown as uncomfortable, unleſs I have thy Preſence in this Palace of mine: and therefore, O when wilt thou come unto me!

The Converted Soul *refuſes*, what God informs it is evil; what God informs it is abominable; and Sin doth very well deſerve the Name of Abomination: The Converted Soul doth ſleight that, which the *Word* of God tells him is but contemptible Vanity.

And as the Will of the Convert does chuſe God above all, ſo it chuſes *other things* with *reference* unto God: It chuſes the *Word*, becauſe it declares the *Will of God*, and what it is that will indeed pleaſe him. It chuſes *Chriſt*, becauſe he is the *way to God* as Mediator: It chuſes *Prayer*, becauſe it is *pouring out the Soul before God.* Pſal. 62. 18. It chuſes the *Ordinances* of God, becauſe God hath appointed them, and is to be *found* in them. The *more* Converts have of God in *any thing*, upon *that* thing is put the *higher eſteem.*

2. The Will of the Converts is *subject unto Gods Laws and Commandments.* The *Heart of Flesh*, why do you think it is so called? *I will take away the Heart of Stone, out of their Flesh, and I will give them a Heart of Flesh.* Why is it called a Heart of Flesh? Partly, because it is *sensible* and *troubled at Transgression*; and partly because it is *soft*, and doth *receive the impression* of the Word, and of the Law of God. It is indeed a fleshly Table on which the *Law of God is written by the Finger of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. 3. 3. God hath written according to his new Covenant Promise, his own *Law in the Hearts of Converts*, and there is a voluntary and delightful Obedience yielded, *Psal.* 40. 8. *I delight to do thy Will, O my God, yea thy Law is within my Heart.*

God saies, *I Command*: The Convert answers, *I Consent*; and *Lord! help me to please thee still more and more*; for I am never *better pleased my self*, than when I best please thee? Thus the Wills of Converts yield to the Will of God; and in this *harmony* that is between the Humane and the Divine Will, there is a great deal of Sweetness: there is really that *inward Peace*, in comparison of which all the *delights*

lights of Sence are but inconſiderable.

3. The Converts Will *ſubmits unto Correction and the Croſs*: Where is there a School without a Rod? The Saints do ſtand in need of Diſcipline, and it is well they have it: Afflictions *wean* us from this *VVorld*, they help forward the work of *Mortification*, they *quicken* us in our ſeeking after God, and the more we ſeek the more we find. *Luther* ſaid, *Crux ſola eſt noſtra Theologia*: That the *Croſs alone is our Divinity*: To improve *Chriſts Croſs* and *our own*, is the way to be truly wiſe. The Convert ſees reaſon for ſubmiſſion, for Gods *Corrections* are all *ſtreams* that iſſue from the *Fountain of Love* that is in him, and they do end in the Souls greater Holineſs, which is its greateſt Profit; and they cauſe the *peaceable fruits of Righteouſneſs* to be brought forth in greater plenty and abundance.

I grant indeed, That Converts may have *Temptations* to, and not only Temptations to, but alſo great *fits* of *Impatience*; but they do ſtrive, and they are helped in ſtriving, to allay the Storm, and to be calmed into a ſubmiſſion to the will of God. The Converted Soul may ſometimes be too much blinded by the prevalency of Paſſion, and forgetting it ſelf, may complain after ſuch a manner as this. *Though*

Though my daies are few *on Earth, yet how are they filled with trouble and sorrow! No sooner have I got my head from under one wave, but another Billow is just ready to overwhelm me. Affliction seems to be my* Lot *and* Portion, *and while the wicked of the World* prosper and increase in Wealth, and have more than Heart can wish, *all the* day long have I been plagued, and chastened every Morning. *If I set my heart upon any temporal injoyment, presently it is struck at, and like* the Gourd of *Jonah, withers away. And if I am full of Expectation from the Creature, my Expectation is ever frustrated, and that which I expected comfort from, proves* Vanity and Vexation of Spirit. *Which way soever I* look, I *see things visible enough to cast me down; nothing visible to support me. O wretched Life! to be always thus under the Cross! to be* troubled, and bowed down greatly, and to go mourning all the day.

Thus the Converted Soul, in its fits of impatience, is ready to complain: But unto these *ravings*, (I call them no other) the Lord is pleased in a *still Voice* thus to answer.

Unreasonable and silly Soul! dost thou well to be angry? *and by thy needless and excessive sorrow to help forward thine own Affliction? hast thou been a Learner so long in my*

my School, and doſt thou not underſtand the Method that I uſe in training up my Children? I give thee little in the World, but it is that thou mayeſt not dye of a ſurfeit, as thouſands and millions do; I croſs thee in thy expectation from the Creatures, that from my ſelf thou mayeſt expect and receive the more: Thou talkeſt of trouble, but am not I thy preſent help? *Thou art in the waves, but theſe waters ſhall not* drown *thee, they ſhall only waſh and* cleanſe *thee, and out of them thou ſhalt come forth much more purified.* Soul, *Ceaſe thy diſcompoſure, I command the* Tempeſt *to be ſtill: Whatever my Wiſdom, and my Love ſees convenient for thee, thou ſhalt not want; and to give thee more than is convenient, would be to injure thee. Thô all viſible ſupports fail, I the inviſible and eternal God am always by thee, and ready to ſhew my ſelf ſtrong on thy behalf: My Care ſhall protect thee and provide for thee, and this may be enough and enough to ſuffice.*

Hereupon the Converted Soul is *quieted*, it is ſatisfied, and as to its Complaints ſilenced, and it replys in *Job*'s language,

Behold I am vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth: Once have I ſpoken, but I won't anſwer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further: Now I ſee more fully who and what thou art, and that my

my impatience and diſtruſt in ſuch a God, was only the effect of my ignorance, unbelief and folly; from henceforth, Lord, I will ſee with no other Eyes but thine; and what thou ſeeſt to be beſt, *as* beſt *ſhall always be acknowledged. My VVill I renounce, and whatever thy VVill is, I willingly aſſent unto: I am ſatisfied that thy Goodneſs and VViſdom will order all things for me the very beſt and wiſeſt way.*

Thus the Will of the Convert is brought to a ſubmiſſion to the Will of God; and as the Convert does ſpeak thus to *God*, ſo he ſpeaks likewiſe unto his *own Soul*, Pſal. 43. *ult. Why art thou caſt down, O my Soul? and why art thou diſquieted within me? hope in God; for I ſhall yet praiſe him, who is the health of my Countenance, and my God.*

So much for the fifth particular: When the Soul is Converted, there is a conformity in the Will of Man unto the Will of God. The Will *chuſes* what God propounds as moſt eligible, is *ſubject* unto Gods Commands, *ſubmits* to Correction and the Croſs.

6. When the Soul is Converted, *thoſe Affections that have evil for their object, do ſpend themſelves on ſin, which is of all the greateſt evil:* Here I ſhall inſtance in *four Affections* that have evil for their Object, and

and when the Soul is indeed turned, theſe Affections ſpend themſelves on Sin.

1. Sin is the Converted Souls *Sorrow*; Tears here are very well beſtowed, God hath a *bottle* to put them in; whereas Tears that flow from worldly ſorrow, are but as commou water. The Unconverted Sinner is never more merry than when doing evil; *When thou doſt evil, then thou rejoyceſt*: O how glad is he of an opportunity to commit a pleaſing and gainful Tranſgreſſion? but the Convert hath been made *ſo* ſenſible of the evil that is in Sin, that he can *never make light* of it more; he hath been made ſo ſenſible of the evil that is in Sin, that he is really inwardly afflicted, becauſe ſo guilty and defiled.

Sin doth provoke divine Anger, and the Wrath of the Almighty is terrible: Sin breaks the Law of God, and the Curſe hereby deſerved is intolerable: Sin cauſes the only Saviour to be neglected, and the Spirit of God to be reſiſted, who ſtrives to draw the Children of men to this Redeemer: Sin does weaken and wound the Soul, makes it exceeding vile, doth it an inexpreſſible miſchief, and therefore well may Sin be ſorrowed for: Take notice how *David* doth pour out his ſorrow here, *Pſal.* 38. 4, 6. *My Iniquities are gone over*

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my head, as an heavy burthen they are too heavy for me; I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long.

2. As Sin is the Converted Souls Sorrow, ſo it is his *Fear* too; the Convert is afraid of contracting *freſh Guilt*, and being overcome by new Temptations. The Convert is afraid of the *very firſt riſings* of Sin; for Sin is an Enemy, and if once this Enemy be riſen, really it may much diſturb the Peace, and give many a painful blow before it is quell'd again: The Convert is afraid of Sins *conceiving*, leaſt being conceived, it *ſhould be finiſhed*, and at laſt *bring forth Death*, Jam. 1. 15. The Convert flies from great Sins, and won't connive at ſmall ones: The Converted Soul is afraid of known and preſumptuous Tranſgreſſions, and it is jealous leaſt any ſhould paſs unknown, and be harboured unſuſpected, therefore the Convert Prayes with *David*, Pſal. 19. 12. *Who can underſtand his Errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret Sins.*

The Convert is ſo afraid of Sin, that he will venture upon other evils rather than upon Sin; he will venture upon Poverty, he will venture upon a Priſon, he will venture upon Flames of Martyrdom, rather than venture upon Sin. *Moſes* was ſo afraid of Sin, though it was attended with

with the Pleaſures and Preferments of *Egypt*, that he did preferr the enduring of Afflictions with the People of God before it, *Heb.* 11. 25.

3. The Converted Soul *hates and abhorrs* Sin: I wiſh there was *no other hatred* in the World but the hatred of Sin; here the moſt fixed and ſettled hatred would be very commendable. Hatred is an Affection that doth aim at the *deſtruction of the thing hated*; he that hateth his Brother, in Scripture is ſaid to be a *Murderer*; and he that hateth Sin, nothing ſhort of the death of Sin will ſatisfie him. It is the Converts buſineſs, from the day of his Converſion unto the hour of his Diſſolution, ſtill to be killing and mortifying of Sin, and he doth endeavour to advance in doing of this work daily; he labours and ſtrives to kill Pride, Covetouſneſs, Concupiſence and Senſuality more dead; and being ſenſible that Sin is much above his Match to deal with, he calls in the help of the Spirit of God, that the more effectually he may mortifie the Works of the Fleſh, *Rom.* 8. 13. *For if ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall dye; but if ye through the Spirit do mortifie the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live.*

4. Sin is the Converted Souls *ſhame*: *Iſrael*

Iſrael that refuſed to turn, they are charged with *Impudence* and hardneſs of Heart, *Ezek.* 3. 7. *They will not hearken unto thee, O ſon of Man,* (ſaith God) *for they will not hearken unto me; for all the houſe of Iſrael are impudent and hard-hearted:* So *Jer.* 8. 12. *Were they aſhamed when they had committed abomination? No; they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh:* But now Converts are aſhamed of Sin, they are confounded before God, becauſe they have ſo much and ſo inexcuſably offended: Heark to *Ephraim*, Converted *Ephraim*, Jer. 31. 19. *Surely after I was turned I repented, after I was inſtructed I ſmote upon my thigh; I was aſhamed, yea, even confounded, becauſe I did bear the reproach of my youth.*

This *Shame* in thoſe that are Converts is of great *Uſe*, for it makes them to *lye low* before God; it makes them in honour to *prefer others* before themſelves: The *chief of Sinners*, ſaith the Apoſtle, being aſhamed, becauſe he *Perſecuted* the Saints; and *leſs than the leaſt of all Saints.* And it makes Converts to *admire the rich* and the *Free Grace* of God, in advancing them to ſuch a dignity, as to become the Children of God, who did ſo juſtly deſerve everlaſting Contempt and Ruine.

7. When the Soul is Converted, thoſe Affe-

Affections that *have good for their Object, are placed upon God, who is the higheſt and chiefeſt good of all:* Doers of evil have not ſeen God, 3 *John* 11. *He that doth good is of God, he that doth evil hath not ſeen God.* The Unconverted Sinner, either ſaith in his Heart there is *no God*, or if there be one, the *Creatures are better* and more deſirable than he: This is the Language of every Unconverted Sinners Heart. But the Converted Soul hath ſeen God, and hath ſeen that in God that he loves *God beſt*, and ſtill deſires to love him *better:* How ſtrong are his deſires after God, and when he is pleaſed to manifeſt his Love, to communicate his Grace with a liberal hand, now the Soul hath the greateſt Joy and Delight on Earth. The Converts *Hope* is in God, his expectation of help is from him, and his hope of Happineſs is in him; he is *Zealous* for the Glory of God, and he is Zealous of thoſe Works that are good in his ſight; and whatever a Convert ſees that hath the Image and Stamp of God upon it, that thing is loved for Gods ſake.

8. When the Soul is Converted, *the Memory is put to good and holy Uſes*; before it was like a *den of Thieves*, like a *Cage full of unclean and hateful Birds*; but now

the Memory is a *Treaſury*, where the *beſt things* are laid up *ſafeſt*. Here I ſhall tell you of four things that the Convert doth remember.

1. The Convert remembers *his Creator*, and indeed no *New Creature* doth *forget* him; he remembers his Duty towards him, and the obligations and encouragements unto a faithful Performance of it. Wicked Men forget God; trifles they can think of, but God is not in all their thoughts, *Jer.* 2. 32. *Can a Maid forget her Ornaments, or a Bride her Attire? yet ye have forgot me days without number*: Thoſe that by Profeſſion are *my People*, and yet really are eſtranged from me, they have forgotten me days without number; but the Convert remembers God, and deſires to be in his Love and Fear all his days.

2. The Convert remembers *the Redeemer, and his death*. The benefits that were purchaſed by ſo great a price, and how the work of Redemption was compleat, when Chriſt roſe from the dead. A ſpecial *memento* is put upon the Reſurrection of Chriſt, 2 *Tim.* 2. 8. *Remember that Jeſus Chriſt, of the Seed of David, was raiſed from the dead, according to my Goſpel.*

3. The Convert remembers *the Word*, and

and that effectually and ſeaſonably; he remembers it, ſo as that he is caſt into the *mould of it.* His heart doth ſtand in awe of the Oracles of God, and they are an excellent preſervative againſt temptation, *Pſal.* 119. 11. *Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not ſin againſt thee. Joſeph* he did ſeaſonably and effectually remember that command, *Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery.* When he had that impure and immodeſt motion made by a Creature that forgot the preſence of God, and her own Duty; and though he was a *ſervant,* and though he was a *young* Man, and an *unmarried* Man; yet he was ſo far from complying with the temptation, that he reproves the concupiſence and ventures upon the revenge of his impure Miſtriſs.

4. Laſtly, The Convert remembers *his latter end, and the judgment that will follow after.* O Brethren, methinks I ſee my ſelf and all you, holding up our hands at the Bar of God. As ſure as you are here, ſo certainly you ſhall ſtand there. The Convert thinks of this at preſent, and he lives and acts as one that is under continual obſervation, *Prov.* 5. 21. *The wayes of Man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.* He lives and acts

as one that is perſwaded he muſt give account of himſelf to God, and is *exceeding diligent that he may be found of him in peace without ſpot and blameleſs.* That's the Eighth particular. When the Soul is Converted, the Memory is imployed to good and holy uſes.

9. When the Soul is Converted, *there is a deſire to be turned to God, ſtill more and more.* That Converſion is not right where there is not a deſire of *progreſſion.* As there is an *inſatiableneſs* in *Sin,* ſo there is an inſatiableneſs in *Grace too,* until there is a compleat Sanctification and Satisfaction in *Glory.* The Convert in ſome reſpects may be compared unto the *Horſeleeches daughter,* ſtill he is crying, *Give, give*; Give more Wiſdom: Give more Grace: Give more ſtrength: Give more of thoſe riches, and treaſures that are durable. It was a ſaying, of one of the Ancient Fathers, who certainly had as great experience of his own Heart, as any of them all, and that was St. *Auſtin, Si dixeris ſufficit, periiſti*; If thou ſayeſt; *I have Grace enough, thou haſt none at all, and art an undone wretch.* He that with *Laodicea* ſays, *I am rich and increaſed with good things, and have need of nothing*; what a wretched caſe is that Man in? He *knows not that he is poor, and*

and miſerable, and blind, and naked.

True Converts are ſenſible of their defects, and have recourſe for ſupplies unto the inexhauſtible *fulneſs* that dwells in our Lord Jeſus; and it is their continual work to be cleanſing themſelves from all filthineſs of the Fleſh and Spirit, and to perfect holineſs in Gods fear. The true Convert he *is not*, and he is ſenſible that he *ought not* to be content with any meaſure of Grace that he hath already received, but he is ſtill longing and crying for more. He wiſhes that the New Creature were better ſhaped in him, and that *Chriſt were more perfectly formed* in him; and being in ſome meaſure *emulous* of Heaven, he doth endeavour to do ſomething for God here, that may reſemble that which is done for him above in Glory.

10. Laſtly, When the Soul is Converted, it *doth act the Body for God*, and cauſeth the Members of it to be yielded as Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs unto Holineſs. The Convert takes care of his Senſes, that at thoſe Gates nothing may enter that may betray and inſnare his Soul; and he ſets a watch before the door of his Lips, that out of that door nothing may proceed which may be diſhonouring to God, injurious to himſelf or unto any

other. It is but reaſon that care ſhould be taken of the body of a Man that is Converted; And that none of the Members ſhould be prophaned, ſince the Body is the *member of Chriſt*, ſince it is the *Temple of the Spirit*, ſince there is ſuch a ſure promiſe made of a *Glorious* and *Happy Reſurrection*.

Thus have I done with the firſt particular propounded to be ſpoken to. I have told you *when the Soul may be ſaid to be truly Converted*.

In the ſecond place, I am to prove, that *till* the *Soul be Converted, Converſion cannot be ſincere*. And there are theſe two or three Arguments that I ſhall produce to make this evident.

1. While the Soul is unconverted, *Sin reigns*. The Dominion of Sin lies in the affection that the Soul hath to it: If the Heart regard iniquity, iniquity is certainly in the *Throne*, and there muſt needs be an abſence of true Grace. The Pſalmiſt ſaies, *Pſal.* 97. 10. *Ye that love the Lord hate evil*, and the Words may be inverted, *Ye that love evil*, certainly are *haters of the Lord*.

2. While the Soul is unconverted, *Satan ſtill keeps Poſſeſſion*, for his ſtrong holds are

are in the Soul. The unreasonable Prejudices, the bad Resolutions, the wicked Inclinations that are there, these, these are the strong holds of the *strong man armed*; and therefore, if the Soul be not turned, Sathan hath his Forts standing undemolished; and as Sathan hath Possession, so Mammon is *chief*, if the Soul be not turned; and where Mammon is chief, Mammon is an *Idol*. And to be *turned to God*, and to have Mammon the *great Idol*; these two things cannot stand together, *Mat.* 6. 24. *No man can serve two Masters, for either he will hate the One and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*

3. While the Soul is unconverted, all *external Righteousness is but a meer shew*: If the Soul be not Religious, the Soul of Religion is wanting. All the works of the hands though never so specious, though never so good as to the matter of them, are but *dead works*, if the Heart and the Soul of the doer is not in them: Thus it is plain that Conversion cannot be sincere unless the Soul be Converted.

3. I am to demonstrate the *Necessity of the Souls Conversion* unto God. In the

former Doctrine by many Arguments, I demonſtrated the Neceſſity of Converſion; now I am to demonſtrate the *neceſſity* of turning to God with the *very Soul*, and there are theſe three or four things that I ſhall produce to make this evident.

1. The Soul muſt turn, becauſe *God is Allſeeing*. He doth not judge of things according to the outward appearance, but the inward man is open and naked to his view: The Heart may deceive the *byſtanders*; Ay, and it may deceive *it ſelf*; but all the ſecrets of the Heart are open unto that God whoſe Prerogative it is to ſearch the Heart, and try the reins. Unleſs the Heart be right with God, all Religion, all ſeeking of him, is nothing elſe but lies and flatteries, *Pſal.* 78. 36, 37. *Nevertheleſs, they did flatter him with their Mouth, and they lyed unto him with their Tongues. For their Heart was not right with him, neither were they ſtedfaſt in his Covenant.*

2. The Soul muſt turn to God, becauſe by *the acts of the Soul God is Principally honoured.* Obſerve it, how is God glorified? when the Soul admires his greatneſs and his Majeſty, and is in a manner overwhelmed with it, *Pſal.* 104. 1. *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, O Lord my God thou art very*

very great, thou art clothed with Honour and with Majeſty, who covereſt thy ſelf with light as with a Garment. How is God honoured? When the Soul is ſweetly aſtoniſhed and raviſhed with his goodneſs, *Pſal.* 31. 19. *O how great is thy goodneſs which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee, which thou haſt wrought for them that truſt in thee before the Sons of Men.* When the Soul ſees that in God, that is to be found in none elſe; when in its choice it doth preferr God before Pleaſure, God before Wealth; I had rather have God to be mine though alone, than to have all things in the World, and be without him. O now the Soul honours God above all. By theſe and ſuch like acts of the Soul God is chiefly honoured, therefore turning muſt of neceſſity be with the Soul.

3. The Soul muſt turn, becauſe it is the *Soul that yields Obedience to the great commands both of the Law and Goſpel.* There is not ſo much as one Precept either in the Law or in the Goſpel kept aright, unleſs the Soul keeps it: The ſumm of the Law is *Love*, but Love muſt be with the Heart and Soul; nay it muſt be with *all* the Heart and with *all* the Soul, or elſe it is but a meer ſhadow and appearance;

pearance; it is but like the Picture of Fire, that hath no more heat in it than the Picture of Snow. Heark what our Lord ſaies to him that asked Him: *Which* is *the great Commandment in the Law?* Jeſus anſwered, *Mat.*22. 37, 38. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.* And as the Law calls for Love, ſo it requires *Spiritual Worſhip*; God is jealous of his Worſhip, and he will accept of none but that which is worſhip in Truth, *John* 4. 24. *God is a Spirit, and he will be worſhipped in Spirit and in Truth.* Now there cannot be worſhip in Truth unleſs it be worſhip in Spirit: All worſhip is but falſe, and if it be falſe it muſt needs be vain, that doth not proceed from the Spirit of the Worſhipper. If you ſhould imploy many hours in a day in pattering over a great many Words that either you don't underſtand, or if you do, you don't mind, all this would be unacceptable; nay, it would be abominable. Then for the Goſpel.

The two great commands of the Goſpel are *Faith* and *Repentance*, neither of theſe can be obeyed without the Heart: It is the *Soul and Heart* that believes, *Rom.* 10. 10. *With the Heart man believeth unto Righteouſneſs, and with the Mouth Confeſſion*

feſſion is made unto Salvation: And as for Repentance, it is impoſſible that ſhould be true, unleſs the Spirit be contrite, unleſs the very Heart be broken: Tears, Complaints, walking ſoftly, rending the Garments, wallowing in Aſhes, this will not prove the truth of Repentance; the Heart muſt be broken, or elſe you have not truly repented, *Pſal.* 51. 17. *The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit; a broken and a contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not deſpiſe:* And ſo in *Pſal.* 34. 18. *The Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken Heart, and ſaveth ſuch as be of a conitite Spirit.*

4. Laſtly, The Soul muſt turn to God, becauſe Judgment at the great day will be according to Truth: Then the Secrets of all Men will be made manifeſt; when the Lord appears, he will *bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the Counſels of the Heart, and then ſhall every man have Praiſe of God,* 1 Cor. 4. 5. At the great Day, all things, all Perſons will be called by their proper Names; Hypocriſie will be called Hypocriſie, and Saints will be called Saints; No Hypocrite will be owned for a Saint at that day, nothing that is counterfeit will paſs for currant; the Judgment of God will be *according to Truth.* In the day

day of Judgment, only Converſion with the Heart, Converſion with the Soul will paſs for true Converſion: Sincerity will be owned, and it will be Crowned; Hypocriſie will be unmasked; and, which ſhould exceedingly ſtartle all unſound Profeſſors of Religion, Hell is in a ſpecial manner called, The *Portion of the Hypocrite*, as it is ſaid, to be *prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

I have ſhewed you when the Soul may be ſaid to be converted unto God: I have proved till then Converſion can never be ſincere: I have demonſtrated the Neceſſity of Converſion with the Soul.

The Application of this Doctrine remains, I ſhall be but brief upon it. There are two Uſes that I ſhall make.

By way of *Information* in the firſt place.

And by way of *Exhortation* in the ſecond place.

From this Doctrine we may be informed concerning ſeveral particulars.

1. If ſincere Converſion be with the Soul, hence we may inferr the *Souls Capacity*. The Soul is chiefly receptive of the Grace of God. It is the Soul of Man that doth principally partake of the divine Natnre. The Soul of Man hath a natural reſemblance

ſemblance of God, becauſe as God is a Spirit, ſo the Soul of Man is a ſpiritual and an immortal Subſtance: And then the Soul doth ſpiritually reſemble God, when it is *renewed in the ſpirit of the Mind*, and when true Holineſs by the Spirit of the Lord is wrought in it. *Eph.* 4. 23, 24.

2. Hence I inferr, the *Souls great worth and value*. Gods Eye is upon your Souls all the while you are in his preſence, and though you do never ſo much, if you deny him your Hearts and Souls, you do nothing that he will accept at your hands. *Thouſands of Rams, ten thouſand rivers of Oyl, the firſt-born for the tranſgreſſion, the fruit of the body for the ſin of the Soul*, as the Prophet ſpeaks, *Micah* 6. 7. What doth all this ſignifie? All this is nothing; nay, let me tell you, it is worſe than nothing. Souls are of *great account* with the Father of Spirits. How much was *done*, how much was *paid*, that Souls might be redeemed! And therefore in all your Services, your Souls muſt be ingaged, or elſe the ingaging is to no purpoſe. The Converſion of *one ſingle Soul* to God, is more pleaſing to him, than the *moſt laborious* and heartleſs ſervices of *all the Hypocrites* from the *beginning* of the World to the *very end* of it; theſe Services are ſo far from being pleaſing, that they

they are expreſly affirmed to be an *abomination unto God.*

3. Hence I inferr *the difficulty of Converſion.* If the Soul muſt be converted, certainly Converſion is a very difficult thing. It is comparatively more eaſie, though hard ſtill, but comparatively it is more eaſie to order the *converſation*; to *bridle* the *tongue*: But to *rule the ſpirit*, to bring the *thoughts into Captivity*; to alter the *bent and natural inclination* of the Will, and to raiſe the Affections towards thoſe things that are above; to make them prized and purſued, that before were things utterly ſleighted; this is difficult indeed; and really the difficulty would be *inſuperable*, were it not for the Reſurrection of Chriſt, and the Power of that Reſurrection ſhewed forth by the *Spirit* of Chriſt. Before a Soul can turn to God it muſt be new made, it muſt experience the power of Chriſts Spirit, and it muſt *riſe with Chriſt*, or elſe it can never in good earneſt *ſeek thoſe things that are above*, Col. 3. 1, 2.

Laſtly, Hence I inferr, that in Examining whether we are Converted or no, a *ſpecial Eye muſt be upon our Hearts and Souls.* We muſt take our Souls to task and ſtrictly try them, and ſee what is moſt *ſuitable* to them, what they *love beſt*, and what it is that

that they *desire most*: And if God in Christ be loved, and chosen above all, then conclude that Conversion is sound and sincere. If the Heart be grieved because it is no more suited to God, because it hath no more Faith in him; and though it can't say with *Peter*, Joh. 21. 17. *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I* do *love thee*, yet it can say, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I* would *love thee! Above all things in the world I desire to love thee, and to be beloved of thee!* Such a kind of *desire* as this, doth plainly shew that the work of of Conversion is *begun*, notwithstanding a great many doubts and fears that do remain about it.

But if under the highest Profession of Religion, if under the most constant attendance upon all Ordinances, the Heart doth secretly go after its Covetousness, the Soul is fond of its Lusts, and of its Vanities, and is resolved still to be so; certainly there is no such thing as a work of Conversion, though there be never so *high and mighty a Confidence* that there is. *Ezek.* 33. 31. *They come unto thee as the People cometh, and they sit before thee as my People, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their Mouth they shew much love, but their Heart goeth after their Covetousness.*

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The Second Use is by way of *Exhortation*. I exhort you all, to *lift up your Souls to God, with a desire that he would turn them to himself*. Naturally your Hearts are in very bad hands, but if you give them unto God, his hands are powerfull, and good, and safe. He can new form your Souls both to and for Himself: And therefore I beseech you, give your consent, and earnestly desire that God would take the Work in hand, and Convert every Soul before him to himself to day.

To prevail with you thus to Consent and Desire, I would lay before you these following Arguments.

1. If your Souls are Converted, they will be *enlivened, though before dead in Trespasses and in Sins*; they will be made alive unto God, *Eph.* 2. 1. You will presently be free from the *Sentence of Death* and Condemnation that ye are under; and ye will be made to *live in the Spirit*, and to *walk in the Spirit*, Gal. 5. 25. O what a Life will you lead, when once ye become Converts! your Lives will become Holy, they will be Heavenly, they will be Angelical: The Spirit of God will be that, and a great deal more unto your Souls, than what your Souls are to your Bodies:

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The Spirit will set you at liberty; The Spirit will act and lead you; The Spirit will fill you with his own blessed fruits, that are both pure and peaceable.

2. If your Souls are Converted, they will be *healed*. Where is the Soul among us that is not sick of various Maladies? and that Soul is most sick that least feels its sickness. *Conversion* and *healing* are joyned together, *Isa.* 6. 10. *Least at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be Converted, and I should heal them.* So *Jer.* 3. 23. *Return ye backsliding Children, saith the Lord, and I will heal your backsliding; behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* The Soul is most precious, and the *best* part in a Man, the diseases of the Soul are the *worst* and most dangerous, and consequently the cure and healing of these diseases is most of all desirable. If thou didst labour under a death-threatning Malady, how wouldst thou long to be cured! Poor Man! thy Soul labours under a great many Maladies, and all of them *Hell-threatning* Maladies; and if thou art not Cured, thou must be damned, therefore Cure should be prized, and Conversion and Curing go together.

3. If your Souls are Converted, they will

be both *beautified and strengthned*; the Image of God, is the Souls Beauty, and Glory, and upon all true Converts this Image of God is Instampt. Sin makes men vile, Conversion and Sanctification makes them excellent, so excellent that the Scripture plainly affirms that the *World is not worthy* of the Saints that are in it, *Heb.* 11. 38. And Strength will follow Conversion as well as Beauty. Who is the strongest upon Earth? The answer is, the Convert is the strongest. All the Unconverted are *without strength*. Alas! they are without Life, and therefore must needs be without strength. The Convert is strengthned with might by the Spirit of God, in the inward Man; so that he is enabled to do good, he is enabled to bear evils with patience; he is enabled to resist the Enemies of his Salvation, he is enabled to Fight, and to Conquer; nay, which is more emphatical, he is enabled so to conquer, as to be *more than a Conquerer through him that hath loved him*, Rom. 8. 37.

Lastly, If your Souls are Converted, they will be both *satisfied and secured*, and what can you desire more? It would be a *loud lie*, if *Mammon* should say that ever he satisfied any: All is *Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit, and there is no profit under the Sun*, Eccles. 2. 11. But now the Lord with

with truth doth say, *I have satiated the weary Soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful Soul*, Jer. 31. 25. Those Souls that are weary and sorrowful, seem *furthest off from Satisfaction*; yet these weary and sorrowful Souls, the Lord is able to satisfie; Nay in Scripture, we read of *abundant Satisfaction*, Psal. 35. 8, 9. *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy House, and thou shalt make them drink of the Rivers of thy Pleasures.*

That which *increaseth* the Satisfaction, is, that the Souls of Converts are secure; the Hand of *Christ*, and the Hand of the *Father* which is *greater than all*, is sufficient to defend these Converted Souls from the force of Earth and Hell, and Sin too. If your Souls are lifted up to God; (*Sursum Corda*: Up with your hearts unto God;) If your Souls are Converted to Him, they will be safe in *Life*, they will be safe in *Death*, and immediately after death they will be *past* all *danger*; being admitted into *that House not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens*, 2 Cor. 5. 1.

Thus have I done with the second Doctrine, *That Conversion is then sincere when the very Soul is Converted.*

Doct. 3. Is this, *That the Word of God is* Doct. III

the great means of Converſion. And O that the Word that ſounds in your ears to day, may be found an effectual Means of the Converſion of all the Unconverted here before the Lord! The Law of the Lord in the Text is ſaid to *Convert* the Soul; becauſe 'tis the Means which the Lord himſelf makes uſe of, and adds an efficacy to, that ſuch an effect may be produced. The Word is ſtyled *the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believes*, Rom. 1. 16. And by this Word Faith it ſelf is wrought, whereby the Soul comes to Chriſt, and by him does Convert to God, *Rom.* 10. 17. *So then Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*; and whenſoever the Word is *effectual* to change a *Sinner*, and turn him into a *Believer*, 'tis *made* effectual by *no leſs* a Power than *His* who is *Omnipotent*. Who *hath believed our report?* There's preaching? *And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* there's the Power of God graciouſly and glorioufly manifeſted; that cauſes Preaching to be ſucceſsful.

In the handling of this Doctrine, I ſhall,

Firſt, Shew you, *what it is in the Word of God, that is made uſe of as a Means of Converſion.*

Secondly, Demonſtrate *the aptitude and fitneſs of the Word to be ſuch a Means.*

Thirdly, I ſhall tell you, *what kind of Means it is.* Fourthly,

Fourthly, *Whence this Means comes to be effectual.*

Laſtly, *Apply.*

I begin with the firſt of theſe. *What it is in the Word that is made uſe of as the Means of Converſion.*

1. The Word *layes before Sinners eyes, the juſt, the ſtrict, the holy Law of God.* It leads them to *Mount Sinai burning with Fire, and to the blackneſs and darkneſs and Tempeſt there:* Where all the Congregation *heard a Voice* that put them into a deadly conſternation and trembling; *and ſo terrible was the ſight that Moſes ſaid, I exceedingly fear and quake,* Heb. 12. 18, 19, 20, 21.

This Law is the Law of the *onely living and true God*; the *King eternal, Immortal, the bleſſed and onely Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.* Who has the higheſt Authority, and full power to impoſe what commands he pleaſes upon the Sons of Men, and they in all duty and reaſon are obliged to yield Obedience to them.

This Law of God is ſo *large*, ſo *Spiritual* and ſo *pure*, that every *evil action*, every *idle word*, nay *every ſinful intent, deſire*, and *thought*, breaks it. Add alſo, that not only the doing, ſpeaking, and

thinking *evil*; but the *not* doing, speaking, and thinking *what is good*, causes this Law to be transgressed. What fallen Man can reach this Laws exactness! Since it *curses every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them?* Gal. 3. 10. 'Tis a certain, and one of the great Oracles of God, *That by the deeds of the Law, shall no flesh be justified in his sight*, Rom. 3. 20. and the reason is added, *because by the Law is the knowledge of Sin.* The Laws *Authority* and *Purity* makes Mans *guilt* and *defilement* the more apparent; and the true sight of these goes before Conversion.

2. The Word of God shews how *all* that have *sinned*, have *by the Law the Sentence of Condemnation really past upon them.* The Sinner that is Unconverted and Unbelieving is said to *be condemn'd already*, Joh. 3. 18. How cold does it strike to the Malefactors Heart when the Judge pronounces the Sentence of Death upon him! Bidding him go from the Bar to the Gaol, and from the Gaol to the Gallows, and there shamefully end his days! The Law of God Sentences every Transgressor unto Death, not Temporal only but Eternal: And though the Execution of this Sentence is for a while defer'd, yet the thoughts of

of being thus ſentenced, ſhould be exceedingly affrighting and amazing. The Sentence of Condemnation paſt by the Law, is very *big* with evils; it *fills Time* with them; nay it comprehends evils enough to *fill Eternity*. The Sinners Life is miſerable, his Death *more* miſerable, and after Death he is *moſt* miſerable, becauſe his miſery will never have an end.

The caſe of a Man is judged very ill and ſad, who is condemned to be broken upon the Wheel; or to be fleaſ alive, or to be roaſted to death before the Fire: But what's all this, if compared with being Sentenced to endure the *pains of Hell*; to *dwell with devouring Flames, which the angry breath of the Lord, as a ſtream of brimſtone doth kindle*; to *inhabit everlaſting burnings?* The hearing of ſuch a terrible Sentence, has a mighty tendency to ſtartle and make *the ſinners in Sion afraid*, and to cauſe *fearfulneſs to ſurprize the hypocrites*, Iſa. 33. 14. that they may be no longer ſecure while unconverted.

3. The Word of God *warns Sinners to flee from the wrath to come*, and the very Warning intimates a *poſſibility* of *eſcaping* it. The Word *from Heaven reveals the wrath of God againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*, Rom. 1. 18. It tells them,

that the Lord has an *Armoury*, which he can open at his pleasure, and *bring forth the weapons of his indignation*, Jer. 50. 25. and there is no Shield for the Obstinate, no standing before these weapons. *Deut.* 32. 40, 41. *For I lift up my hand to Heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering Sword, and my hand take hold on Judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and will reward them that hate me.* The Lord not only *says* but *swears*, and that by his *own Life*, which is for ever; that Death and Destruction will be the Portion and Reward of them that will not turn, but impenitently persist in their rebellion against him.

Sinners are in time warned by the Word, of *this Sword* that's *coming*. Ezek. 33. 7. *Son of Man, I have set thee a Watchman unto the House of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the Word at my Mouth, and warn them from me.* They are warned of the *Vials* that are filling with *wrath*, as they are filling up the *Measure* of their *iniquities*: they are warned of the righteous Purpose and Decree that is pregnant; before it actually *bring forth* vengeance. *Zeph.* 2. 1, 2. *Gather your selves together; yea, gather together, O Nation not desired, before the Decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaffe, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you; before the*

day

day of the Lords anger come upon you. And in *thus admonishing* them to flee from the wrath that is (without repentance) so certainly and justly coming, there is *much* of *pity* and *mercy* shew'd them.

4. The Word of God *encourages Conversion, by representing him in Christ, as ready to be reconciled to, and receive all that turn.* The elect Angels, when they *saw God manifested in the flesh*, admired his *good will* towards *Men*, and proclaimed *Peace on Earth, Luk.* 2. 14. Mercy is not *extorted* from God, for sinners sensible of their sin and misery; but he *delights in shewing it.* Pardon is *not hardly gotten* at his hand, and against his Nature; but he is *ready to forgive.* He is not *almost inexorable* when distressed Souls fear his Power and Wrath, and cry for Peace: but as *they* intreat *Him*, so *He* intreats *them* to be reconciled, 2 *Cor.* 5. 20. *Now then we are Ambassadours for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christs stead be ye reconciled to God.*

The Word speaks of a *Jubilee*, of an *accepted time*, of a *day of Salvation*, in which the Lord seriously calls Sinners, and the very worst of them, to turn; and whosoever he be that turns in truth, shall graciously be received; and his former offences and affronts be they what they will, shall

not

not be an Impediment; nay, the *former refusing* to turn, though it was *never so long*, shall be past by. The proclaiming of this accepted time, should be lookt upon as glad tidings indeed. 2 *Cor.* 6. 1, 2. *We then as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain; for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted; in a day of Salvation I have succoured thee.* Christ himself in the days of his flesh, was heard; was succoured, was carried by the power of his Godhead through the whole work of Mans Redemption: *Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation.* This day of Salvation is the *fruit* of a Saviours Obedience and Sufferings in *his day.* Now those that have sold themselves to commit Iniquity, and are under the bondage of Corruption, may recover their liberty; those that had lost the incorruptible and undefiled Inheritance, may be re-instated, and again possessed of it. Now the Lord is *neer* to them that *seek him*, and ready to be *found*; and if *the wicked forsake their ways and thoughts*, and *return to Him*, he assures them he *will have mercy, and pardon* so *abundantly*, as shall exceed their *conceptions*, and the *manner and wayes* of mens shewing Mercy one to another; as the *Heaven is high above the Earth*, *Isa.* 55. 6, 7, 8.

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5. In the Word of God, there are *Instances and Examples of very great Sinners who have been converted and saved.* How great are the *Acts of Grace*, which have been done by the God of all Grace and comfort! Stand forth, *O David*, guilty of Adultery and Murther! first defiling the Wife, and then killing the Husband afterwards. Stand forth, O thou great Apostle *Peter*, who wast so confident in thy self, that thou shouldest abide the sorest Trial; but didst so basely shrink; and once, twice, thrice, and with Cursing and Swearing didst deny thy Lord! Stand forth ye *Corinthian* Saints, who were *Fornicators, Idolaters, Adulterers, effeminate, abusers of your selves with Mankind, who were thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners*, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10, 11. And all of you proclaim, That *the Grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with Faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*, as the Apostle *Paul* speaks, who himself had *obtained Mercy*; although he had been a *blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious*, 1 Tim. 1. 13, 14.

Setting aside the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost, and final Impenitency and Unbelief; for ought I know, *Heaven* can shew as *great Sinners* as *Hell*, who notwithstanding all their guilt and filthiness, *were washed sanctified justified in the Name of the*

Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our God; and now their Holineſs is perfected in Glory. This is an encouragement to the worſt of men, to hope, if they return to God they ſhall not be rejected. Nay ſuppoſe there ſhould be now a *greater Tranſgreſſour* than ever yet obtained Mercy, it would *not be impoſſible* for ſuch an One to obtain Mercy, for Divine Grace and Mercy have not *yet done their very uttermoſt*.

6. The Word of God *diſcovers Sinners weakneſs, and where that Strength is, without which turning to God will never be*. That Grace which brings Man to God, to Heaven, muſt come from the God of Heaven: Can man *ariſe from the Dead*, till the Voice of the Lord which is powerful ſay, *Awake thou that ſleepeſt*? Can any come to God but by his Son Jeſus? can any come to Chriſt but thoſe whom the Father drawes? *Joh.* 6. 44. God *Works to Will*, He *Works to do*; and he does the one and the other *freely* of his *own good Pleaſure*, Phil. 2. 13. Sinners are then encouraged to ſeek unto God to do both for them. And He can eaſily take away the Heart of Stone, and give a new Heart and a new Spirit; and cauſe thoſe who before neglected, now to turn into the way of Salvation; and to *work out their*

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wn Salvation with fear and trembling.

7. I might alſo add, that the Word of God *ſhuts the Kingdom of Heaven againſt thoſe that are reſolved to continue Unconverted.* Nothing but *Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguiſh* is thundred out againſt them that will continue in their evil doing; that will not be *gathered* by a Saviour, that *will not be made clean* by his Sanctifying Spirit. Nay the Word concludes them under greater miſery, and *dooms* them to a *ſeverer Damnation* who are called to turn and yet refuſe, *Mat.* 11. 23. *Thou Capernaum, that art exalted unto Heaven*; who haſt Heaven offer'd, and ſuch advantages of getting thither; *καταβιβασθήσῃ*, ſhall not only *go* to Hell, but be *brought down* with force and fury to one of the hotteſt and loweſt places there: *It ſhall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for Thee.* Such kind of threats may help to cure the ſpiritual Lethargy, and to make Sinners afraid of remaining Unconverted. You ſee what it is in the Word that has a tendency to Converſion.

In the ſecond Place, I am to demonſtrate *the Aptitude and fitneſs of the Word to be ſuch a means of Converſion.* What has been

been ſpoken already, is in part a Demonſtration of it; but this fitneſs of the Word may be further made evident.

1. The Word is a *Light which ſhines in a dark place*, 2 Pet. 1. 19. and therefore 'tis a proper means to *turn men from darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God.* The Word diſcovers, what the Prince of darkneſs ſtudiouſly endeavours to conceal: Ignorance and Infidelity are the Pillars of Satans Kingdom; he takes much pains to *blind the Minds* of the Unbelievers, that the *Light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt who is the Image of God, may not ſhine into them*, 2 Cor. 4. 4. This light gives a true and faithful repreſentation of *Sin*, as the moſt *hateful* and *hurtful* thing in the whole World; of *Satan* alſo, as the moſt ſubtle, falſe, envious, malicious *Deceiver* and *Murtherer* of the Sons, nay of the *very Souls* of men. The Word reveals the Devils *grand ſecret*, that the *Broad way* is the *high Road to Ruine*, which has been trod by all the Damned: Hell at the end of this way, becomes *naked* by the Word of God; which the Lying Spirit would not have at all to be credited, or ſo much as thought on; till Sinners find themſelves thrown into it, and there without any hope of Releaſe and Remedy.

2. The

2. The Word is a *Perſpective glaſs, which brings things afar off near to the eye, that ſo the Heart may be the more affected.* It ſhews that the *whole* of Time from the very firſt to the very laſt, is but *ſhort*, if compared with *Eternity*; and how the *end of all things is at hand*, 1 Pet. 4. 7. and the *Oath* will at length be ſworn, That there ſhall be *time no longer:* Scoffers indeed, *who walk after their own luſts*, do ſay, *Where is the Promiſe of our Lords coming?* They mock at that glorious Redemption which Believers at Chriſts ſecond appearing do expect; and they *laugh at*, till they *feel* the Flaming Vengeance that is to be executed upon themſelves. But the Word ſhews the *Worlds end*, and how 'tis *reſerved unto fire againſt the day of Judgment, and Perdition of ungodly men.* 2 Pet. 3. 7. The *day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night*, ſadly ſurprizing the moſt of men; *in which the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, the Elements ſhall melt with fervent heat; the Earth alſo and the Works therein ſhall be burnt up.* Oh dreadful ſpectacle, to behold the whole World in a Flame! the ſerious and believing conſideration of this, conduces very much to Repentance, Converſion, and amendment of our wayes. 'Tis the Apoſtles own inference,

rence, *Seeing then that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of Perſons ought ye to be in all Holy Converſation and Godlineſs?* 2 Pet. 3. 10, 11.

3. The Word is an *Hammer to break the Heart.* Contrition and brokenneſs of Heart is one conſtant Ingredient in Converſion: No leſs than Salvation is Promiſed to the contrite ones, *Pſal.* 34. 18. *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken Heart, and ſaveth ſuch as be of a contrite Spirit.* Now the Word is the Hammer which breaks the Stony, the Rocky Heart to pieces. Thoſe Hearers who *derided* the *Miraculous Gift of Tongues*, the Apoſtle *Peters Sermon* reached, and *pierced* their very Hearts, and made them cry out, *Men and brethren, what ſhall* we do? *Act.* 2. 37. Now Sin was ſet in order before their eyes, and charged home upon their Conſciences, now they tremble, and are afraid of deſerved Wrath: now their ſtubborn ſpirits begin to yield unto God. They deſire to know upon *what terms* they might be *ſaved*, being willing to *conſent* to *any terms*, rather than miſs of Salvation, and periſh everlaſtingly.

4. The Word is a *Fire, to melt and purifie*, and ſo a proper means of Converſion, which is indeed a turning from *Sin* to *Holineſs.*

Holineſs: 'Tis the Nature of Fire to ſeparate the Mettal, and the Droſs: Gold and Silver are refined by being put into the Furnace. Thus the Word alſo ſeparates between the Heart and its vicious and evil Habits and Qualities; it ſeparates between the Soul and its fleſhly and worldly Luſts: *Now are ye clean*, ſays Chriſt, *through the Word which I have ſpoken unto you*, Joh. 15. 3. This Word is very Pure in it ſelf, and Pure in its Operation and Effects: It ſeverely forbids *all filthineſs of the Fleſh and Spirit*; and in this Word we find as a *Precept* concerning Holineſs, that 'tis our Duty to *perfect Holineſs in the fear of God*, ſo a *Promiſe* wherein God has ſaid *he* will *work* this Holineſs in them that ſeek unto him and deſire it, *Ezek.* 36. 25. *Then will I ſprinkle clean water upon you, and you ſhall be clean; from all your filthineſs, and from all your Idols will I cleanſe you.* The Word is a Fire to Melt and Purge the Soul, and then 'tis a *Mould* alſo, into which the Soul is as it were *caſt*; ſo that it has another, an excellent form, being conformed to the holy Nature and Will of God himſelf.

5. The Word is as *Seed, of which the New Creature is begotten*: God himſelf is he who does regenerate all that are Converted,

verted, and he does it of his own meer good Will and Pleaſure; but the Word is the Seed by which he does it, *Jam.* 1. 18. *Of his own Will begat he us with the Word of Truth, that we ſhould be a kind of Firſt-fruits of his Creatures:* So 1 *Pet.* 1. 23. *Being born again, not of corruptible Seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever:* From this Seed comes the *New Man*, which after God is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. This Word is *quick and powerful*, 'tis powerful to quicken and enliven; ſo that the Soul has a new Life, and lives to God, which before was dead in treſpaſſes. This Seed is effectual to a new formation of the Souls faculties and powers: New Eyes there are in the Mind, a new Diſpoſition and Inclination in the Will; the Affections alſo are new, and of low and carnal, they become high, and holy, and heavenly. The Preachers of the Goſpel are the ſowers of this Seed of the Word, and how ſhould they be in travel till a New Creature comes on't, till Chriſt be formed in them that receive it! *Gal.* 4. 19. *My little Children, of whom I travel in birth again, till Chriſt be formed in you.*

6. The Word is a proper Means of Converſion, for 'tis the *unerring Rule, which*

which ſhews both good and evil: Evil, that there may be an Averſion from it; Good, that there may be a Converſion to it. The Scripture calls things by their deſerved Names, what that pronounces bad, will be found by the moſt Unbelieving to be bad indeed; and what that affirms to be good, is really good at preſent, and proves beſt at laſt: Here are the Commandments, in conformity to which true Goodneſs lies, and Sin is defined ἀνομία, a tranſgreſſion of them; heark to the Prophet, *Mic. 6. 8. He hath ſhewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* All this is good in its own Nature, pleaſing to God, profitable and pleaſant unto Man: The better this is underſtood, the more likely 'tis that evil and dangerous wayes ſhould be forſaken, and thoſe Paths choſen and turn'd into, that are ſafe and holy. The Word ſhews what God approves, and what he abhorrs: It ſhews Mans Duty, which is his Priviledge, and that Sin is Mans Prejudice and Plague: And he is a good Scholar indeed, *who has learnt to do well, and ceaſed to do evil.*

7. The Word is a fit means of Converſion, becauſe it is *the Miniſtration of the*

Spirit; 2 Cor. 3. 8. *How ſhall not the Miniſtration of the Spirit be rather glorious?* The Word of God is of the Spirits Inſpiration, and his own Word he is pleaſed to accompany, he moves, and breaths, and acts in it, ſo that Miracles of Grace are wrought thereby: He ſays to the *blind* Mind, *Receive thy ſight*, and know the things that concern thy Peace; to the *Deaf* the Spirit ſays, *Hear my Voice*, and yield Obedience; to the *Dead* he ſays, *Ariſe out of thy Sins, and from the Earth*, in which thou haſt layn ſo long *buried*, and live the *Life of God*, from which thou haſt been ſo long alienated. And as the Spirit thus ſpeaks, ſo he ſpeaks with efficacy: He can work ſo that none ſhall hinder. O bleſſed Word! in which we find that exceeding great and precious Promiſe of the Spirit; 'tis but *asking* him, and *having* him, and *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*, 2 Cor. 3. 17. The Captive Sinner is freed from the *bondage of Corruption*, the *cords of Vanity*, the *ſnare of Satan*, and has both a *Will* and *Power* given him to Convert to God, and to continue and abide with him. 'Tis manifeſt upon all theſe accounts, that the Word has a fitneſs to be a means of Converſion.

In the third place, I am to tell you, what

what *kind of Means the Word is.*

1. The Word is a Means of *Gods own appointing:* Divine Inſtitution is a thing of very great ſignificancy: God indeed can work without means, and againſt them; but if he is pleaſed to appoint them, they deſerve to be uſed, and ſhall not be uſed in vain, if they are uſed ſeriouſly. God appointed *ſeven Trumpets of Rams-horns* to be blown, and at length the blaſt is more powerful than a *battering Ram*; the Walls of *Jericho fall down to the ground*, and the City is delivered into the hand of *Iſrael*, *Joſh.* 6. 4, 20. God has appointed the Miniſters of the Goſpel to lift up their Voices like a Trumpet, to ſhew the Tranſgreſſours their Iniquities, to cry to them to turn. The Word is with Power; the ſtrongeſt holds of the Prince of Darkneſs fall down before it, he is caſt out, his works deſtroyed where before he had the ſureſt Poſſeſſion. The Word is ordained of God as the Means of Converſion, 'tis dangerous, and a great Contempt of God himſelf to neglect it; and truly, after a careleſs manner to attend upon it, is the way to grow more hard-hearted and dead in Sin under it.

2. The Word is uſually *moſt Powerful when Preached.* Reading of the word muſt

be granted an Ordinance of great use. When our Lord was asked by a man what he *should do that he might inherit Eternal Life?* He answers, *What is written in the Law? how readest thou?* Luk. 10. 26. He that would inherit Eternal Life, it concerns him diligently to *read* the Word which instructs him in the way thither: Not only those of a lower condition, but those of the *highest Estate* are to *read the Word all the dayes of their lives*; the Word of God is the *best Counsellour*, even of *Kings* themselves, *Deut.* 17. 18, 19. The way to Heaven is *one and the same* both for the *High and Low.* The Word is to be read not only *Privately* but *Publickly*, such publick reading has a warrant in the New Testament as well as the Old, 1 *Thes.* 5. 27. *I charge you,* ὁρκίζω ὑμᾶς, I adjure *you by the Lord that this Epistle be* read *unto all the Holy Brethren.* And publick reading is mentioned no less than *three times* in one verse, *Col.* 4. 16. *And when this Epistle is* read *amongst you, cause that it be* read *also in the Church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise* read *the Epistle from Laodicea.* Certainly the Scripture is not *so obscure*, but that it may be read before the Congregation to their Spiritual Benefit.

Yet the *Preaching*, the opening and applying

plying of the Word of God, has a ſpecial Honour put upon it, as to the working of Converſion and Faith, *Rom.* 10. 14, 15. *How then ſhall they call on Him, in whom they have not believed? and how ſhall they believe on Him, of whom they have not heard? and how ſhall they hear without a Preacher? and how ſhall they Preach except they be ſent? as it is written, How beautiful are the Feet of them that preach the Goſpel of Peace, that bring glad tidings of good things?* They that are ſent of God, ſcripturally qualified, ſeparated and ſet apart to the work of the Miniſtry, 'tis their great buſineſs to *Preach the Word, to be inſtant in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-ſuffering and Doctrine*, 2 Tim. 4. 2. And when in Sincerity, with an earneſt deſire *to win Souls*, they make the *Truth manifeſt*, and endeavour to *commend themſelves to every mans Conſcience in the ſight of God*, 2 Cor. 4. 2. the Word of God is the more likely to reach the Conſcience, and to touch and turn the Heart to Him. Glorious things have been done by Preaching: The twelve Apoſtles, and if you will add a thirteenth, the Apoſtle *Paul*, how powerful was the Word in their Mouths to the Worlds Converſion! They did not as they were ſlander'd, *turn the world upſide*

side down, but were blessed Instruments to turn it to God, and to deliver it out of that Idolatry, Superstition, Ignorance and Wickedness, in which it had lain buried for many ages.

3. The Word of God is the *highest means of Conversion*, Psal. 138. 2. *Thou hast magnified thy VVord above all thy Name*: Here chiefly thou doest make thy self known in the powerful Effects of thy Grace and Spirit, and in the accomplishment of the Promises which thou hast made. The design of *Mercies* is, that this *VVord* may be more *minded*, Rom. 12. 1, 2. *I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye present your Bodies, a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable, which is your reasonable service: And be not conformed to this VVorld, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds; that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect VVill of God.* Mercies are cords of love to draw us to the Lord, and to constrain us to keep his Word and Commandments. The *end of Affliction* is to turn our Eyes, and Hearts and Feet, into the way of Gods Testimonies: The Psalmist tells us, *Before he was afflicted he went astray* but after he *kept the VVord* with greater care, *Psal.* 119. 67. and he adds

adds, *v.* 71. 72. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes; the Law of thy Mouth is better unto me, than thousands of Gold and Silver.* Affliction is sent to humble for Transgression, to reduce the wandring Soul, and to bring it back to the Word of God; and when this Word is truly heeded, received, and highly prized; then the Soul is indeed Converted. The Word declares the *meaning of Mercies*, the Word is the *Tongue* that utters the *voice* and *message* of the *Rod*: The Word directs what to pray for, and how to pray so as to speed, and instructs about every other Ordinance.

4. If the Word be ineffectual to Conversion, *alas! what is likely to become efficacious?* When *Wisdom* had *cryed* long and upbraided foolish Sinners with their *hating Knowledge*; when they had been called to turn, with a proffer of the *Spirit to be poured out*, but they refused still; their case is set forth as desperate: because the Word being rejected, hated and cast behind their back, nothing was likely to do, or to make them good; dreadful and utter Destruction is threatned; and instead of being pitied, they are told they shall be derided, and *laught at* in their ruine, *Prov.* 1. 20, —30. When the Rich man in Hell intreated

ted that One might be ſent from the dead, to warn his *five ſecure impenitent Brethren, leſt they ſhould alſo come at laſt into the Place of Torment:* The Anſwere firſt is, *They have Moſes and the Prophets, let them hear them:* And after 'tis anſwered further, *If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded though one roſe from the dead,* Luk. 16. 27.—31.

A Sinner whoſe Heart is all Adamant, and Sermon-proof, the terrours of the Lord don't affright him; the ineſtimable Treaſures of the Goſpel don't take him, the Mediatours Vengeance for neglecting great Salvation is not at all dreaded. Suppoſe a command ſhould be given to unlock the gates of Hell, and a damned Spirit that has been for ſome time tortur'd in the flames there; and was once well known to this ſtupid Sinner, ſhould at Midnight appear to him, and the Curtains being drawn aſide, and that Soul out of the midſt of fire, with a ghaſtly horrour in its looks, ſhould thus ſpeak to Him:

Awake, hard-hearted Wretch, awake! awake! What, ſleep and lye ſecure in Sin, that art in danger of dying in Sin every moment! What, take thine eaſe, who art ſo near to endleſs pain and Torment! Thy time has both Feet and Wings, and is with great haſte both run-

running and flying away from thee; and as thy time in Sin and folly ſpends, ſo thou daily and hourly approacheſt nearer to a miſerable Eternity. Thy Judgment lingers not, thy Damnation does not ſlumber, *while thou refuſeſt* to awake to Righteouſneſs? *Once I made* a mock of Sin *as much as thou doſt, was mad to deſtroy my ſelf, as thou art; I made a* meer Jeſt of Hell, *but now I know, I feel, and wo, wo is me! I ſhall to my Sorrow feel for ever,* what 'tis to be damn'd in earneſt. *Sin's thy worſt Enemy! Oh caſt it away before it undoe thee paſt remedy. Divine wrath and jealouſie is in the* other World, *found a* hotter *and* heavier *thing than ever could be conceived* in this: *'Tis really* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. *But I have leave to ſtay no longer, be ſure to take this warning I have given thee, I muſt again to the* Lake that burns with fire and brimſtone, *where there are no ſuch things as* Help, *or* Hope, *or* Happineſs, *but Pain and Miſery are extream and endleſs.*

Suppoſe, I ſay, a damned Soul ſhould ſpeak ſuch language to a Sinner that has all along been deaf to the call of the Word, and reſiſted the Spirit of the Lord, he might perhaps be exceedingly amazed; and poſſibly be *frighted* out of his *Wits*, but

but he would not be *ſcared* out of his *Sins*, nor ever by ſuch an *Apparition alone*, be turned unto God. If Gods own Word will not make thee a Convert, O Sinner, thy diſeaſe is obſtinate againſt the likeliеſt remedy, and what means will?

5. The Word is a Means which *Thouſands and Millions in the VVorld never were ſo much Priviledg'd, as to enjoy.* An *Halelujah* is juſtly deſerved and expected from the People of God of old, becauſe *he ſhewed his Word unto Jacob, his Statutes and Judgments to the Children of Iſrael; whereas He had not dealt ſo with any Nation, and as for his Judgments they had not known them*, Pſal. 147. 19, 20. How great a part of the World is *Satans Common*, how little, comparatively, is ſo much as the *viſible Incloſure* of our Lord Jeſus. It is the obſervation of a Learned man, that if the World were divided into *thirty* parts, *Nineteen* would be found ſtill *Pagan*, ſix *Mahometan*, and but *five Chriſtian*, take in all of all Perſwaſions. But alas, how much darkneſs is there even in Nations that are called Chriſtian! Ignorance is affected, the Word of God and the Knowledg of it is taken away, though the Scripture ſays that for *lack of it people are deſtroyed*, *Hoſ.* 4. 6. How Happy would *you* be, that in

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this City, enjoy the light of the Word of Truth, if you would but thankfully and fruitfully improve it. It is as it were *Noon day* with you, whereas in other places, it is but a *dark down*, and in moſt parts of the Earth a *black midnight*.

In the fourth place, I am to tell you, *whence this Means*, the Word of God, *comes to be effectual to Converſion*.

'Tis made effectual by the *Power of God*, and this Power he exerts by his *own Spirit*, 1 Theſ. 1. 5. *Our Goſpel came not unto you in word only, but in Power alſo, and in the Holy Ghoſt, and in much Aſſurance:* the wonderful effects of Divine Power wrought by the Holy Ghoſt in the Preaching of the Goſpel, was an Evidence and Aſſurance, that this Goſpel is not the Word of Man, but of God Himſelf. Now the manner of the Spirits working, when he makes the Word effectual to Converſion, I ſhall declare in theſe particulars.

1. The Spirit impreſſes upon the Sinners Heart the Divine *Authority* of this Word. 'Tis indeed θεόπνευστος, *given by inſpiration of God*, 2 Tim. 3. 16. When the *Lord* Himſelf is *eyed* and *own'd* in his Word, then it ſhews it ſelf *mighty*. If the Meſſengers and Publiſhers of the Word only are regarded, and there is not a *looking beyond them*,

them, they being but *earthen veſſels*; the Word though a *Treaſure*, will be trampled under foot. But when Sinners are Converted, the Spirit makes it evident that the Word is really of God. The demonſtration of this, is ſtyled the *demonſtration of the Spirit*. He does demonſtrate the Words divine Authority, ſeveral wayes.

By *Signs* and *VVonders*, wrought for its Confirmation, *Heb.* 2. 4. *God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.* That theſe Miracles *were done*, 'tis plain; for the Word of God pretending to Miracles done ſo openly, ſo often, by and upon ſo many perſons, in the midſt of cunning and malicious Adverſaries, who were watchful enough to have eſpied the deceit, if there had been any: if ſuch Miracles really had never been wrought, this Word, and the Religion it teaches *would never have been received.* Our Lord Jeſus, though the *Son of God*, when upon Earth, was *humbled in the form of a Servant*; yet affirms himſelf to be the *Saviour of the VVorld*; preaches a Doctrine contrary to Fleſh and Blood; tells all that will be his Diſciples, they *muſt deny themſelves*, and forſake all that is dear to them in this World, whenever

ever they are called to it, for the ſake of a Treaſure and Kingdom in Heaven. And often he *appeals* to his *working Miracles*, as a Confirmation of his Doctrine that it was from Heaven. Now if ſuch Miracles had never been wrought, the Impoſture would have been ſo apparent, that the Chriſtian Faith would never have been embraced by any of common ſenſe and underſtanding.

And 'tis evident alſo, that theſe Miracles were done by *the power of God*. Wonders indeed were wrought by the *Egyptian Magicians*, but *outvied* by greater Wonders, effected by *Moſes*, Gods Servant. Theſe Miracles were beyond the Power and Ability of ſecond Cauſes: Who could make the *blind* to *ſee*, and the *deaf* to *hear*, and the *lame* to *walk*, but that God who *formed the Eye*, *planted the Ear*, and curiouſly *faſhioned* the other Members? Who would *raiſe the Dead*, but the Lord of of Life himſelf?

The Spirit further alſo demonſtrates the Words Authority from the accompliſhment of Scripture Propheſies; as concerning *Cyrus building of the Temple*, Iſa. 44. 28. The *King of Grecia* his ruining the *Perſian Monarchy*, which was verified in *Alexander* the Great, *Dan.* 8. 21. The *calling of*

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the Gentiles, Iſa. 42. 4. Zeph. 2. 11. How many *falſe Gods* do we find *famiſhed*, and the Lord Jehovah *worſhipped in the Iſles of the Heathen*. It was alſo fulfill'd, which our Lord ſpake, concerning his Death; that after his *being lift up from the Earth, he would draw all men to him*, which was rather likely to drive all men from him: He alſo ſaid he would have a Church to *the end of the World*, Mat. 28. *ult.* and notwithſtanding all that Earth and Hell can do, he has had one to this very day.

The Spirit alſo ſhews the *divine Matter of the Word*, the admirable conſent and agreement of all its parts, and the deſign of the whole, which is to give Glory to God, and to repreſent him as moſt worthy of Admiration, Praiſe, Faith, Fear, and Love, and Service. Its Precepts are ſo excellent and pure; that if the Profeſſors of Religion would but live according to them, the World might quickly be convinced of the unreaſonableneſs of Infidility. A thorow perſwaſion of the Words Authority, is from the Spirit, and has a mighty force to ſtartle the Conſcience, and awe the heart of a Sinner: And to make it ſtoop unto God, which was before rebellious.

2. The Spirit cauſes the Word moſt

firmly

firmly to be believed, as that which is of most certain verity and truth, this follows upon the former: If it be the Word of God, who *cannot lye*; there is nothing false or uncertain in it. Ever since Man first harkned to the Father of lies, he is very prone to embrace falshood. He is not to be trusted as a Guide, any further than God guides him; because so apt himself to err and mistake. But *let God be true*, saies the Apostle, though it follows, *and every Man a Lyar*, Rom. 3, 4. *God cannot be deceived, because he is Omniscient*, and *his understanding is Infinite*, Psal. 147. 5. And he *will not deceive* any, because he is the *God of Truth*. Whatever has proceeded out of his Mouth, its certainty is not to be doubted of: *Faith* therefore, which believes whatsoever God speaks, and because he speaks, is indeed the *highth* and very *flower of Reason*. We read of a *Door of Faith*, Act. 14. 27. *They rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles*. The Word of God has entrance by Faith, as by a Door into the Heart, and Faith as a Door shuts it in; *then*, how powerful is it in working! The Commands being lookt upon as indeed the Commands of God, will no longer presumptuously be

broken; the Promises being believed to be the Promises of God, who keeps Truth for ever, will be embraced. A firm belief of the Words truth, is at the bottom of all true Conversion to God; and 'tis Infidelity that is the great reason of departing from him.

3. The Spirit *powerfully convinces the Sinner how evil a thing Sin is, which the Word of God so severely and strictly forbids.* Sin is that which of all things in the World is *most of all mistaken.* If it were rightly known by all, not one in the World *could* love or like it. But most are ignorant what 'tis, and whither it tends; and securely and unconcernedly remain under its guilt and power. Mens lusts are styled ἐπιθυμίαι τῆς ἀπάτης, *deceitful lusts*, *Eph.* 4. 22. they seem to consult their gain and pleasure, but indeed *war against their Souls*; and yet this War is so carried on, that 'tis not perceived: Souls are kept stupified and intoxicated, till they are utterly lost and ruined.

'Tis the work of the Spirit to discover what Sin is. He shews how *contrary 'tis to God*, how evil and provoking in the eyes of his Holiness and his Glory; how *contrary 'tis to the Law of God*, which is most excellent, all whose Precepts are most profitable

ſirable and pleaſant to thoſe that love and keep them. He ſhews likewiſe how *contrary Sin is to Man* himſelf. It loads him with Curſes of various ſorts; it makes every thing he has to be curſed to him: It does defile, debaſe and wound him; and unleſs he turn from it, it will for ever deſtroy and damn him. 'Tis one thing to be told of all this by *Man*; and another, to have a powerfull diſcovery and Conviction of all this by the *Spirit*. He ſhews the Vanity of all ſins excuſes, pretences and promiſes of Impunity, Peace and Safety.

The Spirit ſpeaks very home to the Conſcience, and particularly; and cauſes the Sinner to whom he ſpeaks to hear and heed and tremble. *Thou art the Man that haſt offended God! Thou art the Soul that haſt ſinn'd, and doſt deſerve to dye! Thou art the Fool-hardy Wretch that haſt engaged the Almighty to be thine Enemy! Againſt thy ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs in particular, his wrath is certainly revealed from Heaven! And how ſoon, if thou refuſeſt to forſake thy impious and unrighteous ways, may this wrath fall upon thee, and ſink thee into the bottomleſs pit of Wo. If thou reſolveſt ſtill to go on in thy treſpaſſes, thy very next ſtep may take hold of Hell!*

4. The Spirit *reveals Chriſt in the Word,*

and draws the Sinner to him. The Holy Ghoſt does teſtifie concerning the Lord Jeſus, *Joh.* 15. 26. *The Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he ſhall teſtifie of me.* And what a Glorious Teſtimony does he give him! Chriſt is the ſumme and ſubſtance of all Supernatural Revelation. All the lines both of the Old Teſtament and of the New, do meet in this Center. The deſign of the Old Teſtament was to *forſhew* him, as the Peacemaker between God and Man, who was to be *wounded for tranſgreſſion*, to make *his Soul an offering for Sin*, to *bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs*, and to be the Author of *plenteous and eternal Redemption and Salvation.* The New Teſtament, which is the accompliſhment of the Old, does more fully declare Chriſt: Here the Spirit more plainly tells us, of his Godhead, of his fulneſs, of his Manhood, of his Mercifulneſs, what power he has to ſave; what Bowels of Pity towards them that ſee they are loſt without him. And in *ſhewing all this*, how does the Spirit ſhew himſelf a *Comforter!*

And as the Spirit diſcovers Chriſt, ſo he *draws the Sinner* to him; he cauſes the Word to reach the Heart, and to ſubdue it, ſo that the Heart gladly ſurrenders, and freely

freely opens to receive Jesus, which before by ignorance, prejudice and unbelief was very fast Bolted and Barr'd against him. There can be no turning to God, but *as he is in Christ:* for how can guilty and defiled Man, draw near to the Holy and Righteous Jehovah, without a Mediator? And if he be considered *in this Mediator*, there is *all possible Encouragement* to turn to him.

5. The Spirit, as by the Word he works Faith in Christ, so by the same Word, he *causes the Sinner to yield himself to God:* He that was before *stout-hearted and far from Righteousness*, now throws down his Weapons of Rebellion, and submitting, cries for Mercy; he dares not still rush on in Sin, as *the Horse into the Battel*; he is made sensible that there is no contending with the Almighty, that *none ever hardned themselves against him and prosper'd*, Job 9. 4. Therefore he bows and yields, least he be broke and ruin'd. And as the *Power of Gods anger* makes the Sinner *afraid* of remaining Unconverted, so he is *most strongly induced* to turn, by the Spirits effectual discovery of Gods *Alsufficiency*, *Mercy*, *Loving-kindness*. He sees plainly, it can never be *well* with him while at a *distance* from God; and that in *Him* and in his

Favour, is really his *Life* and *Happineſs*. Thus the poor Prodigal was afraid of continuing in the far Country, leaſt he ſhould there *periſh for hunger*, and he came home to his Fathers houſe, becauſe there *was bread enough and to ſpare*, Luke 15. 17.

I come in the laſt place to the Application: I begin with *ſome Inferences* that may be drawn from this Doctrine.

1. If the Word of God be the great means of Converſion, hence I infer, *that this Word is a great Priviledge*: The giving us the Light and Influence of the Sun, and Moon, and Stars, is acknowleged to be the needful Bounty of the God of Heaven, but the vouchſafing of the Word ſpeaks a more *peculiar favour*, and is a means to convey a far *greater benefit*. In this Word of God, there is a general Proclamation, a Proclamation of a general pardon of all offenders againſt the higheſt Majeſty, and that upon the moſt equal terms; that they prize this favour, make uſe of his Sons mediation to obtain it, and conſent by Sin willingly to wrong their own Souls no more. This Word carries in it a Proclamation to *open* the *priſon-doors*; to unlooſe the bonds and fetters, to grant liberty unto all thoſe that are weary

of the bondage of corruption, and that are willing to become the Lords Free men; this Word is an *Invitation* to all ſenſible Souls, that perceive they have ſpent their labour for that which *is not bread*, to come for the bread of *God which comes down from Heaven, and which giveth life unto the World*, Joh. 6. 33. O the tender mercy of God, in vouchſafing his Word to any.

When the Light of this Word ſhines, it finds Sinners in Darkneſs, imployed in the works of darkneſs, haſtning towards the blackneſs of darkneſs for ever; and it doth give *them the knowledge of Salvation by the remiſſion of Sin, and guide their feet into the way of peace*, Luke 1. 77, 78, 79. Thoſe are *glorious times* indeed, that is indeed a *Golden age*, when the Word of God is heard by every ear; when Labourers are many and Faithful, and are hard at work for God, for Chriſt, for Souls; when ſaving Knowledge doth fill all the corners of a Land: Happy, happy is that People that is in ſuch a caſe, if they do but rightly improve their priviledge; for this Word doth direct them *to walk in the Light of Gods Countenance.*

2. Hence I inferr, how *inexcuſable they are that remain Unconverted ſtill under the Word of God, which is the great Means of*

Conversion. The Light of Nature leaves those *that glorifie not God as God, without excuse*, Rom. 1. 21. But the Light of the Word, doth much more take away all Apology from them that neglect it. They that are not Converted to God, when they hear this Word, neglect to trade with one of *the choicest Talents* that any of the Children of Men can be entrusted with.

To pass over the whole Volume and *Book of Nature*, to take no notice of God in it, though every Creature be designed as a Remembrancer of Him; to pass by the *works* of Providence, and not hereby to be brought to the Fear of, and Faith in God, who exerciseth *loving kindness and Judgment in the Earth*; Nothing can be said to defend it. But for a *Sinner*, a *lost Sinner*, a miserable Sinner, that is ready every Moment to fall into Hell; for *this Man* to hear the Gospel of Christ, to have Pardon so fully and freely offered to him, and *yet* to be deaf to the offer, to refuse to turn to the Lord, though hereby he will live for ever; this doth argue a *far more exceeding and excessive* madness.

What can the Unconverted Sinner plead for himself, that he doth not turn? Can he say, that he hath not been warned to flee from the wrath to come? Alas, the Al-

Almightys anger and indignation hath often been *pealed* in his ear. How often hath he heard, *Wo to the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands ſhall be given to him*, Iſa. 3 11. Can he ſay that he hath not *been called to turn?* No ſuch matter: Wiſdom hath cried aloud, cryed vehemently, *How long ye ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity, and the ſcorners delight in their ſcorning, and fools hate knowledge; turn ye at my reproof*, Prov. 1. 22, 23. Again, can the Sinner plead that he hath *not had encouragement* to turn to God? No, no; the God of Heaven, the God of Truth, hath ſolemnly proteſted by *his own Life*, that *he hath no pleaſure in the Sinners death*, but had rather that he ſhould turn and live: Hear O *Heaven!* Hearken O *Earth!* and judge, whether the Sinner that is called to turn to God, and *won't*, does not deſerve to dy in his iniquities!

3. If the Word of God is the great means of Converſion, hence I inferr, that the *Removal of the VVord is a very ſore Judgment*; How ſore, I wiſh that *England* may never feel by ſad experience! A *Famine of Bread*, is affirmed to be *worſe* than the *Plague of Peſtilence*, worſe than the *Sword of VVar*; though Plague and Sword are very terrible; but a *Famine of the VVord* of God, is the *worſt ſort* of Famine, and it

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is threatned as a punishment, which is an *indication of far greater wrath*, Amos 8. 11. *It shall come to pass in those days saith the Lord God, that I will send a Famine in the land; not a Famine of Bread, nor a thirst for water; but a Famine of hearing the VWord of the Lord.* The Antithesis here between these two Famines doth heighten the severity of the punishment. A Famine of the VWord is a punishment that is *Spiritual*, so much the more hurtful, because it reaches the Spirits of Men; so much the more hurtful, by how much the Soul is more precious than the Body.

Ay, but, may some one say, what great harm is there if there should come such a Famine? I will tell you. To have the VWord of God removed, it is to have the *Sun of Righteousness set*, and all hopes of Conversion and healing quite gone. To have a Famine of the VWord sent, it is to have a *Church unchurched*, a Vineyard laid waste, and not only turned into a *Common*, but into *barren and cursed ground*. To have a Famine of the VWord sent, it is to have the Lord to spue a people out of his mouth, and say, *I will never return to this Vomit again*. To have a Famine of the VWord sent, it is to have the Lord to *give a Bill of Divorce*, and upon this Bill of

of Divorce writ *Loammi*; you are not my people; *Lorahamah*, I will no more have mercy on you. Tremble, tremble, every one that hears me this day, at the thoughts of ſuch a Judgment as a Famine of the VVord of God! Pray! pray, that this Judgment may never be inflicted upon *England*! I read that there was *ſeven years plenty* in *Egypt*, before there was the *greateſt Famine* that ever *Egypt* knew. I heartily wiſh that our preſent Liberty, and plentiful injoyment of the VVord of God, *be not a fore-runner of the moſt dreadful Famine of it that ever* England *knew!* Pray it may not be ſo, pray that God would ſtill give you *Paſtors after his own heart*! Pray that God would *cauſe you to lye down* in *green paſtures*, that *he would lead you beſides the ſtill waters, that he would reſtore your Souls, and lead you in the paths of righteouſneſs for his Names ſake*, Pſal. 23. 2, 3. And when you pray for this, fill your mouths with Arguments. Tell the Lord of his *own honour*, which his VVord doth direct the Children of Men to yield to him: Tell the Lord of his *Sons Intereſt*; He will neither be believed in, nor known, unleſs there be the VVord of God to reveal him: Mention the promiſe that the Father hath made unto the Son the Mediator,

diator, *to give him the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the utmost parts of the Earth for his Possession*, Psal. 2. 8. That of the *increase of his Kingdom and Government, there shall be no end*, Isa. 9. 7. Urge him with that word that he hath said, *the Earth shall be filled with Knowledge as the waters cover the Sea*, Isa. 11. 9. Be importunate in pleading such Promises as these, and it will manifest that you prize the VWord of God, and are afraid of its going. And this importunity will be mighty pleasing to God, and very prevalent with Him.

4. Hence I inferr, That *whensoever the Word of God is effectual to the Conversion of any, there is just cause of great thankfulness.* When means attain their designed end, it is a satisfaction unto those that use them; and the higher and better the end is, the satisfaction is the more: The Conversion of a Sinner to God is one of the *best things* that can be done in the World: to feed the hungry, to cloath the naked, to relieve the oppressed, to cure the dangerously diseased, to sheath the Sword of War, and to establish Peace in Kingdoms and Nations, *all* these are *works very good*; but let me tell you, that the turning of a Sinner unto God doth imply a far greater

er benefit, because it doth include Eternal Blessedness. The *lost Sheep*, the *lost Silver*, the *lost Son*, were all missed with *trouble*, and were all found with *great Joy*. When the Word is Powerful to Convert a Soul; Oh, what a precious thing is then secured! It is secured from Eternal Misery, and there is an everlasting Kingdom that it shall at last be brought safe unto, 2 *Tim.* 4. 18. *The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and he will preserve me unto his Heavenly Kingdom.*

When a Sinner is Converted, how thankful should he *himself be!* for he is catched, as a Fire-brand out of the burning; he is delivered from *intolerable Wrath*, and interested in *unchangeable Love!* How thankful *should Ministers be*, when they see their spiritual Offspring, and Christ formed in them! How thankful should *Saints be*, when they behold their Number increased! If they *beheld* the *Transgressours and were grieved*, certainly, with gladness should they behold them turning from Transgression. Nay, those *Angels* that are in Heaven, take notice of Conversion, as a just ground of great Joy: What was said concerning the *first Creation*, may be applyed unto the *new Creation*, the *Morning Stars do sing together, and*

all

all the Sons of God, the whole Hoſt of the Principalities and Powers of Heaven *do ſhout for Joy*, when any are converted and made indeed new Creatures.

5. Hence I inferr, that it *is no wonder that Sathan and his Inſtruments would fain have this VVord of God out of the VVorld*, ſince it is the great means of Converſion. O what a *hateful Book* unto *Hell* is the *Holy Bible!* If evil Angels might have their wiſh, I am perſwaded their wiſh would be this; that *Souls may burn in Hell*, and that *Bibles might be burnt on Earth.* Oaths, Curſes, Blaſphemies, Lying, Slanders, Railing, filthy Diſcourſe, prophane Songs, and Laughter, Mirth and Muſick, damnable Hereſies and Doctrines, theſe have all a very pleaſing ſound in Sathans ears: Ay, but the powerful and plain Preaching of the Word of God *Sathan cannot bear*; this is very *harſh*, and it is very grating to him, and he doth endeavour to *ſtop the mouths* of ſkilful Diſpenſers of the Word of Righteouſneſs for he fears their voice, leſt his ſtrong holds ſhould be pulled down. If in ſpight of him a *door of utterance be opened*, this evil and *envious One*, endeavours to ſhut *men with prejudices* againſt them, that they may have but *very few hearers*; but

their Hearers are a very great Multitude; O then how doth he beſtir himſelf to *hinder the entrance* of the Word, that *Eyes*, and *Ears*, and *Hearts* may be ſhut againſt it! Chriſt compares the Word of God unto Seed, and *evil Angels unto Fowls*, that endeavour to *catch it away as ſoon as ſown*, Mat. 13. 4. that ſo it may be altogether fruitleſs, or bring forth no fruit unto Eternal Life. When there are a great many Pick-pockets in a Crowd, upon notice, Perſons are the more careful of their Purſes: O what a company of *evil Angels* are *here*, that are *arrant Thieves!* and they will endeavour to rob you of the Word of God; it concerns you to heed the Word, and to hide it in your Hearts, and then it will be ſafe; a *good and an honeſt Heart* will certainly ſecure this Treaſure.

6. Hence I inferr, that the *Diſpenſers and Preachers of the Word* of God, which is the great means of Converſion, *ought highly to be eſteemed in Love for their works ſake*, 1 Theſ. 5. 12, 13. *We beſeech you Brethren, to know them that labour among you, are over in the Lord, and admoniſh you, and to eſteem them very highly in love for their works ſake, and be at peace among your ſelves.* When Chriſt aſcended up on high,

far

far above all Heavens, that he might fill all things, the Miniſtry of the VVord was *a gift* that he did beſtow upon his Church, *Eph.* 4. 11. The Miniſters of the Goſpel as they are inſtrumental to *feed* the Flock, ſo they are inſtrumental to *make* the flock too; for the Spirit of God doth accompany their Miniſtry, and makes it effectual to alter corrupted Nature, ſo that thoſe that were before like *Dogs*, like *Swine*, like *VVolves*, like *Lyons*, are changed, and they become the *Lambs*, and the *Sheep* of the Lord Jeſus. VVhatever kindneſs is done for the Preachers of the Goſpel, it is not comparable unto the kindneſs they do, when they are made inſtrumental unto the Converſion of any. *Theodoſius*, that wore an *Imperial Diadem*, was ſenſible of this, when he ſaid, *I thank God more that I have been a member of Chriſt, than that I have been the Emperour of the VVorld.* The Miniſtry of the Goſpel is the Gift of Chriſt, and if this Gift be deſpiſed, Chriſt the giver is contemned, and the Father which hath ſent him too, *Luk.* 10. 16. *He that heareth you, heareth me, he that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me, and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me.*

4. How earneſtly *ſhould Preachers pray, that the Word in their Mouths may be effectual*

to Converſion. Ay, and they ſhould call in the help of *others Prayers too*, that they may ſucceed in the preaching of the Goſpel of Reconciliation, 2 *Theſ.* 3. 1. *Finally Brethren pray for us, that the word of the Lord might have free courſe and be glorified, even as it is with you.* Every Sermon that the Preacher makes ſhould be the *Gift of Heaven*; it ſhould be the return of Prayer, and both before and after preaching; having Heaven, and Hell, and Precious Souls, all in his Eyes together; being in a holy agony, he ſhould *pray with all poſſible earneſtneſs* that precious Souls may not be irrecoverably loſt and ruined! Memorable is the paſſage of the Apoſtles, *Acts* 6. 4. *We will give our ſelves continually unto Prayer and unto the Miniſtry of the word.* Prayer is *firſt* mentioned. If by Prayer the Preachers can *prevail with God*, the VVord of God in their Mouths, is the more likely to be *prevalent with Men.* A Preacher ſhould be a *man of Bowels*, and becauſe his own are Marble, he ſhould long after the Converſion and Salvation of Souls in *the Bowels of Jeſus Chriſt*, Phil. 1. 8. Alas, the Souls that are before him, if they won't *hear*, they can't *live*: if they won't *repent*, Deſtruction is at the *door*; if they won't *believe* they *muſt* be *damned*;

and there is no remedy. How therefore ſhould we cry to the God whoſe Word we preach, that he would give Grace to repent, Grace to believe, Grace to turn to him; for though a *Paul* be the *Planter*, though an *Apollo* be the *Waterer*, both are nothing, but *God* that *gives the increaſe* he is *all*, 1 Cor. 3. 7.

8. If the Word of God be the great means of Converſion, then hence I inferr, that, that *Society and Church is to be avoided, that takes away this Word from the common People.* The true Church it doth concern you to know, and I will tell you how it may be known; it is *built upon the Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief Corner Stone*, Eph. 2. 20. There is an agreement between the Doctrine of the Apoſtles, and Prophets: This Doctrine ſets forth Chriſt as the Foundation of a Chriſtians Faith and Hope; ſets forth Chriſt as the *only Saviour*, and as a *Saviour to the utmoſt*. If therefore *this Doctrine be decryed* by any, thoſe that do decry it are to be avoided. It is certainly Helliſh cruelty unto Souls, to take away the means of Converſion and Salvation from them. *That can't be the Kingdom of Chriſt, the props of which, are Ignorance of the Word of God, and an implicite*

Faith

Faith in men. The Apoſtle *Paul* ſpeaks plainly, 2 *Cor.* 4. 3, 4. *If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt*: and *v.* 6. *God who commanded the Light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined in our Hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.* But the Practice of many plainly ſhew, that *they are of another mind*, and their mind is this, that if *the Goſpel be revealed, it is revealed to them that are loſt*; *and that God, inſtead of commanding the Light to ſhine into the minds of thoſe that are ſaved, doth command darkneſs to abide there ſtill.*

But here is an Objection that muſt be removed out of the way. Say ſome, If the common People are permitted to look into the Word of God, inſtead of being *turned to God*, they are but likely to *miſtake his Mind*, and to run into *abundance of errour*, and ſo to hurt and poyſon themſelves. An ordinary Objection, but it is eaſily anſwer'd.

1. This is plainly to *charge the God of Heaven fooliſhly, and blaſphemouſly, as if he had given ſuch a dangerous Word to his Church*, as that it is not *fit*, or *ſafe* for them to make *uſe of*. The Objectors don't take notice, that God hath with ſuch Goodneſs, Wiſdom, and care compiled the

Holy Scripture, that it is a Means to *prevent running into Errour*, and the truest Knowledge is derived from hence. Hark to the Psalmist, *Psal.* 119. 105. *Thy VVord it is a Light unto my Feet, and a Lamp unto my Path.* Wo to them that *put Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness*! And before *v.* 104. the Psalmist said, *Through thy Precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way.*

2. I answer to this Objection, That the *Jewish Church, though in a State of Minority*, had *not the VVord of God withheld from them.* All were to read it, all were to meditate upon it, and yield obedience to it: Nay observe, that even the Children were not to be Ignorant of the Scripture, *Deut.* 6. 6, 7. *These VVords that I command thee this day, shall be in thine Heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy Children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* If the *Jewish Church*, which was a Church in *Minority*, had the Word of God generally vouchsafed, certainly the *Christian Church* ought not to be denyed it, which are arrived unto a *State* of *greater Maturity*, as the Apostle intimates, *Gal.* 4. 1, 2, 3.

Lastly,

Lastly, Whereas it is said, that if the common People read the Scriptures, and study the Word of God, they will be in danger of running into Errour. I answer, *How much Errour*, how much mistake is there in *gross Ignorance?* Besides, those men that have been the great *broachers of Errour and Heresie* in the Church of Christ, have been men of *great parts*, and men of profound Learning, as *Arrius* and *Pelagius*, and the rest. So that if there was any force in this Objection, the Word of God must not be medled with by *any at all.* Blessed be God, that the humble have a Promise of Guidance and Instruction from Heaven, *Psal.* 25. 9. *The meek will he guide in Judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.* And while Christians are using the Word of God, if they cry to the *Father of Lights, that gives wisdom liberally, without upbraiding*, they shall have a *Heart to know him*, that he is the Lord, *Jer.* 24. 7. *and they shall return to him with the whole Heart.*

9. Hence I inferr, *That we should be such lovers of Mankind, as to wish the whole World did enjoy the Word of God, the great means of Conversion.* It should be a sadning thought to our Hearts, that though *all mankind* have sinned, and are in a *lost*

estate, the Word of God that informs concerning the only Saviour, is *known to so very few!* The *Jewish* Church of old for hundreds of years did put up that Prayer, and at length it was answered in the Vocation and calling of the *Gentiles*, Psal. 67. 2. *That thy way may be known upon the Earth, and thy saving health among all Nations*? Christians should Pray in the *same strain*, that this Petition may be *heard further*. Christians should be compassionate Intercessours for the poor World that lyes in darkness and wickedness, that the Light of the Gospel may come wherever the Sun in the Firmament shines, that so *whole Kingdoms and Nations*, by *thousands* and by *millions*, may not thus *throng* the way to *Hell*, for want of Saving Knowledge and Converting Grace.

And as we should pity and pray for the *Infidel World*, so we should pity and pray for *poor Posterity*; that they, when they come to be born into *England*, may find this a *Land of Light:* for if we should leave them without the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, we should leave them under *Sathans Power*, and *in the Confines of Hell*! O let us put on Bowels, and pray hard that those that shall be born, twenty, forty, a hundred years hence and more, may

may find *England* the Land of *Immanuel*, and may be priviledged with the Word of God, that may be a means of their being regenerate and born again.

10. *Lastly*, Hence I inferr, How *inexcusable those are, that turn the Word of God, the great means of Conversion and Salvation, into a deadly savour to themselves.* O the evil Nature of that *Sin of unbelief*; the evil Heart of unbelief doth make the greatest Blessings to become Curses. To grow more blind under the Light; to grow more deaf and disobedient, the louder God calls; to grow more barren and unfruitful, notwithstanding all advantages to make you thrive in Grace and Goodness; what excuse can be brought for this? To receive the *Grace of God in vain*, is a very great folly; but to *turn the Grace of God into wantonness*, to Sin because Grace doth abound, this is to turn *the very* Remedy *and Antidote* into *Poyson*, and to perish the more *certainly*, the more *fearfully*.

The Apostle *Paul*, 2 Cor. 2. 16. telleth us, that his Ministry was a *savour of death unto death* to some, they grew more dead, more estranged from God and Holiness, even while they heard the Gospel, that is a Doctrine according to Godliness, preach-

ed to them; and growing more dead in a ſpiritual ſence, eternal Death did prove the ſorer to them. That man that under the Word of God grows worſe and worſe, comes daily to hear, but goes away more vain, more filthy, more wedded to his will, and to his hateful and hurtful luſts, this Man is indeed *deſparately* wicked; this man doth *fix himſelf* under the *Laws Curſe*, he pulls down upon his own Head the *Mediators Vengeance*, and after his *hardneſs and impenitent Heart, treaſures up unto himſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.*

The ſecond Uſe is by way of *Reproof*. If the Word be the great means of Converſion, ſeveral ſorts of Perſons are ſharply to be reprehended.

1. Thoſe that *diſlike and hate the VVord of God*; theſe are Fools in the worſt and moſt dangerous ſence, that *hate Inſtruction, and caſt the Laws of God behind their backs*, Pſal. 50. 17. Theſe are *bruitiſh*, that can't endure to be reproved for doing *harm to themſelves*; they are certainly *bewitched* that will not obey the *Truth*, Gal. 3. 1. As Chriſt ſays, For which of *my good works do ye ſtone me?* ſo ſay I, For which of *the*

good

good *Effects of the Word of God do you hate it?* It is Light in darkneſs, a means of conveying Life to the dead, Food to the hungry, a Cordial to the fainting, a Sword to ſecure you againſt, and to conquer your ſpiritual Enemies. And therefore, if you diſlike this Word of God, you are even unto *ſottiſhneſs*, without underſtanding: It is a Scripture phraſe, *Jer.* 4. 22. *My people are fooliſh, they have not known me, they are ſottiſh Children, and without underſtanding; they are wiſe to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.*

2. Thoſe are ſharply to be reproved, who *endeavour to hinder the Efficacy of the Word of God upon others*; this they do by *ill Counſel*, and by *worſe Example*. This they do by being *Contentious againſt the Truth*, and by *pleading for unrighteouſneſs*. This they do by *promoting prejudices* againſt the Word of God; as if the embracing of it, were the way to Melancholich, ſadneſs, ſorrow, and ſcorn, which is indeed the way to the trueſt Gain, and the ſureſt Peace. They that are troubled to ſee others minding Heaven, are *ſtrangely degenerate*, and are become *Factors for Hell*; and diſcover a moſt *diabolical Diſpoſition*. But whatſoever Perſons ſpeak againſt Grace and Holineſs, whatever they ſay for the

continuance in a wicked way: all their words are but *vain words*, and every ear should be deaf to them. *Eph.* 5. 6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the Children of disobedience.*

3. Loose *Professours of Religion* are to be reproved, who are indeed a *discredit to the Word of God:* they come and hear the Word of God, but what are they in their Families? what are they in their Closets? what are they in the whole course of their Lives? Filthiness, greediness after Gain, excessive Drinking, Impurity, Covetousness, these things indeed they can shew but too much of: But any thing of true Holiness, of Humility, of Strictness, of Contempt of this World, of Delight in minding another World, they are utter Strangers to. Will you remember one Truth? *The Conversion of the prophane is very much hindred by the licentiousness of the Hypocrites*; the *former* won't be prevailed with to turn into the *way of Truth*, because the *latter* by their evil Courses do make *this way of Truth to be evil spoken of*, 2 Pet. 2. 2.

I shall conclude with a *Use of Direction*. How may the Word of God be *heard so*, as that it may be *effectual to the Conversion of the hearers?* 1. Con-

1. Consent that all the *Impediments of the Words efficacy should be removed.* Be unwilling that your hearts should be like the *high-way ground*; utterly careless, grossly Ignorant of the Truths you hear. My Beloved, do you think that Sathan hath not carefully *treasured up all* the *Sermons* that you *have lost*? all the Sermons that you have *slept away*? all the Sermons that you have remained *Ignorant and stupid under*? Sathan hath them *to produce and shew against you* at the great *approaching day.*

Be unwilling that your Hearts should remain like *stony ground*: a *hard heart* will hinder the Word of God from taking root. Be not *terrified* at any Persecutions, that you may meet with for the Words sake: Let the fear of God swallow up the ensnaring fear of Man. Pluck up *all the thorns*, and how many of them are in your hearts. Away with your *cares* about the World, let not these eat up the *heart and time*, and expell the more *needful care about the one thing necessary.* Be not deceived by *Earthly Riches*, let not these dazle your eyes with their glittering, nor cause you to look with a strange eye upon the Treasures of Heaven which are everlasting. In a word, be not fond of your Lusts, of your Pleasures any longer. Sin hath kept

you

you at a distance from God, and the Children of wrath and disobedience, but too long already.

2. Chuse to sit *under that Ministry that speaks most home to the Conscience*; and that doth manifest the most earnest desire after the Conversion of Souls: Those that are instructed from Heaven rightly to *wield the sword of the Spirit*; so that it shall pierce the heart, and as it were dissect the Soul, and make the *secrets of it manifest*; really, their pains are very much to be prized; and it were to be wisht that the voice of such could reach the *ears of thousands and of millions*; because these Preachers are bound for Heaven themselves, and it is their desire and design that great multitudes may go along with them thither.

3. Be *glad of, and take the watchmans warning*; believe and tremble at the *Sword of God*, that is coming to wound, to slay all those that *go on still in their trespasses*, Psal. 68. 21. Destruction from the *Almighty*, in which the Power of God is to be manifest in the glory of it, must needs be *exceeding terrible*: settle it upon your hearts, that every Sin doth anger God: Flee from Sin you *must*, or escape his wrath you *cannot*. As certainly as *God is holy, just and true*,

rue, ſo certainly *none but thoſe that are ho-* *y* ſhall be *happy* in and with him; ſo certainly all that refuſe to turn to him, ſhall be Sentenced to *depart for ever from him* into everlaſting burnings. Your Blood will not lye upon my head, I have told you of the Sword that is a coming: I have given the watchmans warning, if you love God, if you love your ſelves, take it.

4. Hear *God himſelf ſpeaking by the Miniſtry of Man, if you would have the Word effectual to your Converſion:* Alas! the *word of Man* is but *feeble breath*, but the Word of God *can raiſe the dead*, John 5. 25. *Verily, verily, I ſay to you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear ſhall live.* It is not Man (miſtake not.) It is *not Man*, but *God*, that telleth you that *the Soul that ſinneth ſhall dye.* It is not Man but God that tells you, if *you turn to him, he will turn to you*, and he will become a *God and Father to you*; and you, though never ſo much *ſtrangers*, though never ſo *great enemies*; ſhall become the *Sons and Daughters of the Lord Almighty*, 2 Cor. 6. *ult.* Theſe Goſpel invitations, theſe Goſpel Promiſes ought to be heeded, ought to be credited, as if God had utter'd them with

with an audible Voice from Mount *Sion*, *as he did the Law of old from Mount Sinai: Friend, where are you?* You are *before God who is speaking to you*: You are taking notice of the *man*; Pray look further, God speaks to you by the *Tongue* of a mortal Man. In hearing the Word, remember that you have to do *with God*, and how *dare you refuse* to turn to him?

5. Lastly, Would you have the Word effectual unto your Conversion; Pray that *God would open your Hearts to attend to what is spoken.* We read of *Lydia*, that *her Heart was opened:* Naturally it was *shut*, and it would have *remained shut still*, notwithstanding all the *skill and Endeavours* of the Minister: The Text plainly tells us, that it was the *Lord that did open the heart of Lydia*, Acts 16. 14. And as the Lord did open hers, so it is the *Lord alone that can open yours.* Upon the hearing of this, one should *sigh and say, Lord open mine!* Another should *groan*, and say, *Lord, open mine!* And a third should *burst out into tears*, and say, *Lord, open mine!* And this should be the general *request* of all, That God would immediately open the Heart of *all*; and if once your hearts are opened, then the Word of God will enter, and the Spirit of Grace will enter, and all will turn

to

to God that are before him.

Thus have I finished the third Doctrine that I raised from the Text, *That the Word of God is the great means of Conversion.*

Doct. 4. I come to the fourth and *last Doctrine*, that I raised from the words, and that is this. *That in the Word of God, which is the means of Conversion, there is a Perfection and Sufficiency.* Doct. IV

The Law of the Lord is perfect, Converting the Soul: I wish that the Power of this Word upon your Hearts and Consciences this day, may be a *sensible Demonstration* of this Words *perfection.* There are several *properties* of this Word, that do *commend* it, and render it much more desirable than all the Worldly wealth and greatness that the Children of Men do so much admire. It is of *Heavenly Original*; it is *true*, it is *necessary*, it is *pure*, it is *powerful*, it is *perspicuous and plain*; and among other properties of the Word, this is one, it is *perfect.* The Law *of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul:* The Hebrew word signifies *pure*, without *mixture*, *whole* and *compleat*, having nothing *wanting.* There is no *defect* in this Word of God of any thing that *ought to be there*, and it cannot be

be charged with any thing that *ought not to be there*; or that doth *unbecome* that *God*, whose Word it is.

In the handling of this Doctrine, I shall proceed in this Method.

1. I shall shew you in *what sence the Word of God is perfect*: And,

2. By Arguments I shall *prove the Perfection and Sufficiency* of the Word of God.

3. I shall give you the *Reasons why the Perfection and Sufficiency of the Word of God is mentioned*, when *Conversion is spoken of*.

And then in the last place, I shall conclude with the Application.

1. I am to *state this Perfection* of the Word of God, and to shew you in *what sence* the Word of God is *perfect*. By his Word you are to understand, that which is contained in the *Scriptures of the Old and New Testament*; the Penmen of these Scriptures, were the *Amanuenses* of the Spirit, and whatever they wrote, they wrote what was by *him dictated*. Holy *Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, 2 Pet. 1. *ult*. And they have given us a *Testimony* of the Will of God upon *record*; a full and compleat Declaration of his Mind.

Now concerning this Perfection of the Word

Word of God, I ſhall ſpeak,

1. By way of *Negation.*
2. By way of *Poſition.*

1. I am to ſpeak by way of *Negation*, and that in theſe following particulars.

1. You muſt *not* underſtand that *the Word is ſo perfect, as that by it ſelf without the concurrence of the Spirit it can give either Grace or Life to any.* The moſt faithful and skilful Preachers of the Word *as to ſucceſs*, have many times *laboured in vain:* That Evangelical Prophet *Iſaiah*, who ſpake ſo *much*, and ſo *plainly* concerning *Chriſt*, you have him crying out, *Lord, who hath believed our report?* Iſa. 53. 1. Weeping *Jeremiah*, you may hear him complaining after this manner, *Jer.* 6. 10. *To whom ſhall I ſpeak and give warning that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumciſed, and they can't hearken; the Word of the Lord is a reproach to them, and they have no delight in it.* The Word of God in the mouth of the Apoſtle *Paul* that great Preacher of the Goſpel, it *found*, ay, and it *left* many a hearer in their *Infidelity:* The hearers of the Apoſtle *Paul*, it is ſaid that divers of them *believed not*, *Acts* 28. 24. Nay our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf, the *Prince* of *Preachers*, the *greateſt that ever was*, that ever *will be*, he thunders out a Wo againſt *Corazin*

and Bethſaida, and *Capernaum*; becauſe the Word that *ſounded from his lips*, did not perſwade them unto Repentance: So that the Word *alone* is not ſo perfect, as to give Grace, as to give Life to any. There is need, that the *Spirit of God* ſhould *work along* with it; until *He* doth open the eyes of the underſtanding, the Soul ſtill remains under darkneſs; till he doth renew the Heart, the Will will never yield nor ſubmit to God; till he doth put the Laws of God in the *mind*, and *write them in the Heart*, they will never be believed, they will never be liked nor obeyed.

2. You muſt *not* think that the *Word is ſo perfect, as to give a knowledge here on Earth as is equal to the knowledge that is in Heaven*: The Apoſtle *Paul* himſelf profeſſes, *we know but in part, and we propheſie in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part ſhall be done away*, 1 Cor. 13. 9. And in 12. *ver.* of the ſame Chapter he ſays, *We ſee through a glaſs darkly*. The Greek word it is remarkable, We ſee through a Glaſs in a *Riddle*; *ἐν αἰνίγματι*. Truly Heaven is but a Riddle at preſent unto the *beſt* of *Saints* here on Earth. They are *no more able* to *comprehend* the *joys*, the *Glory* that is *there*, they are no more able to comprehend what it is *to ſee God*

God face to face; than an Infant in the womb can imagine what Light is, than an Infant in the womb can comprehend what *Philoſophy* is, or the myſteries of *State policy*: here is no *Theologia meridiana viſionis, perfect day*, here is no *beatifical viſion*.

I grant indeed the Saints are ſometimes brought into the *Suburbs of Heaven*, and when they are there, Oh! what do they *ſee*! They ſee and taſt that in God, that does make the greateſt ſweetneſs of earthly Enjoyments deſpicable; and that doth obſcure all Worldly Glory; but yet the Suburbs are not the Heavenly City, but infinitely below it. Hark to the Apoſtle, 1 *John* 3. 2. *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be, but we know that when he ſhall appear we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is.* Wicked Men think *nothing* of what the Saints *ſhall be*: and truly the *Saints themſelves*, when their minds are moſt *elevated*, and *raiſed*, and enabled to to ſee *moſt*, they apprehend but *little* what themſelves ſhall be hereafter. That Glory is too *great* a thing for ſuch minds as ours at preſent to *take in*: *It hath not entred into the Heart of Man, to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him*, 1 Cor. 2. 9.

3. You must not think that the VVord is so perfect as that the hearing of that is enough, and is to *exclude all other Ordinances.* Indeed those *Ceremonial Ordinances* that were imposed only for a *time*, that are called *Carnal*, and that were to last only till the *evangelical Reformation*, as the Apostle speaks, *Heb.* 9. 10. these Ceremonial Ordinances are *abolished* under the Gospel Administration, *Col.* 2. 20, 21. *If you be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the World, why as though living in the World, are ye subject to Ordinances? touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with the useing, after the Commandments and doctrines of Men.* But though these Ceremonial Ordinances are abolished, there are *other Ordinances* that God hath Instituted, that are *still standing*, and *will remain* and be in *force* till our *Lords second coming.*

These Ordinances have a *warrant* from this *perfect Word it self*; and there is a Promise made, of a divine, special, powerful, gracious presence with them.

As you are to have an *Ear* to hear the VVord, so you are to have a *Tongue* to *pray* to God, and *praise* him; and your Hearts and Tongues should joyn together in supplications and thanksgivings: Ay, and you are to have an *Eye* to behold the *Seals*

of

of the Covenant, that ſo your Hearts may be more affected, and your Faith by things ſenſible may be ſtrengthned in God, who hath made and confirmed this Covenant, and will keep it everlaſtingly. *Zachary* and *Elizabeth* were a *noble Pair indeed*; excellent patterns of *uprightneſs before God*; for they walked in *all the Commands, and in all the Ordinances of the Lord blameleſs*, Luke 1.6. It is a great Affront unto the *Authority* of Chriſt the Law-giver, when we ſhall give our ſelves a *Diſpenſation* as to *ſome Ordinances* that he hath appointed. There is no Ordinance of God to be neglected; and I am ſure, if any of the Ordinances are neglected through the prevalency of Temptation, the *inward Man* by its *weakneſs*, and by its *trouble*, will quickly find the want of theſe Ordinances.

O! prize the Ordinances of God, that you may ſtill enjoy them; *theſe* are the *vehicles of Grace*: Spiritual *ſtrength*, and ſpiritual *comforts* are conveyed in the *uſe* of them: And thoſe that are the moſt *experienced Saints*, do perceive moſt reaſon to eſteem them.

4. You muſt *not* think that the *explaining of the Scripture by it ſelf, is excluded by the perfection of it; but rather included.* Expounding of Scripture is not an Argument of Scriptures imperfection, for Scripture if rightly

expounded, is expounded *by it self*. To impose that *as Gods* which is none of *his*; to say *this* and *that* is the *mind* of God, which indeed *is not*; this is a *daring*, this is a *wicked addition* unto the VVord of God; but to expound the Scripture by it self, to compare the VVord of God with it self, that so we may attain to the better understanding of it; this is very allowable, nay it is a very needful Duty.

The Apostle *Paul* doth deliver to us an excellent Rule of Propheſie, *Rom.* 12. 6. *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether propheſie, let us propheſie according to the proportion of Faith*, κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν πίστεως. In our expounding of Scripture, this *Analogy and proportion of Faith*, is very much to be obſerved. Now this Analogy, or proportion of Faith, doth imply the *conſtant mind of God in the more plain parts of the Scripture*; and therefore *contrary* unto *this*, a ſence of the *more obſcure parts*, is in no wiſe to be admitted. The Apoſtle *Peter* tells us, 2 *Pet.* 1. 20. *That no propheſie of Scripture is* ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως, *of private interpretation*, or of *Mens own interpretation*, which I think it had better have been tranſlated.

This *interpretation*, it may have a double reference; either to the *inſpired Pen-men of Scrip-*

Scripture themſelves, who were the *Interpreters of the Mind of God unto the Church, and unto the World*; and they ſpake nothing that was *private*, they ſpake nothing that was *their own*, but all that VVord delivered in inſpired Scripture, it was from God.

Or Secondly, This Interpretation may have a reference unto the *Expounders of Scripture*: and whoſoever they are at this day, that do expound the Scripture, that Expoſition it muſt *not be their own*. Suppoſe there was never ſo great a Council aſſembled together; ſuppoſe it was a *General Council*; yet if they deliver any thing that is *their own*, it would be a *private Interpretation*, and it is in no wiſe to be admitted. The VVord of God is a perfect VVord, and by it *ſelf alone* it is to be *Interpreted*.

Shall I give you three Rules? I wiſh they were obſerved! The Rules are theſe. In Mans corrupt and *fallen ſtate*, *Sin is all in all*. In Mans *renewed ſtate*, *Chriſt with his Grace and Spirit is all in all*. And hereafter in *Glory*, *God will be all in all*. If theſe three Rules were obſerved, it would help you the better to underſtand the whole Word of God. Thus much be ſpoken by way of *Negation*.

2. I am to speak by way of *Position*, and in several Propositions I shall tell you in what *sence* the VVord of God is perfect.

1. The VVord of God is perfect *as a Means*, and therefore in the using of it, your Eye must be unto *him* who is the Fountain and principal Efficient of all that is truely good. Natural means, as Food to sustain Nature, Physick to recover it when it is decayed, have their Efficacy from God; therefore you read, *Mat.* 4. 4. *That man doth not live by Bread alone*: But now the VVord is a *Moral means*, and consequently the Efficacy of it is not so *common and ordinary* as the Efficacy of Natural means. Nature doth like that which is for its own Preservation, but the Souls of men are so corrupted and besotted by sin, that they utterly dislike what is for their own benefit. Therefore God is seriously to be sought unto, that he would *bless this Means with success*, that of his *own will* he would accompany his VVord, and make it effectual to *Regeneration*. *James* 1. 18. *Of his own will begat he us by the Word of Truth*.

Brethren, the Means of Grace are to be used *as Means*, and in no wise are they to be advanced *higher*, as if their Efficacy was of

of *themselves*. Being satisfied in the *work done*, O how many thousands hath it hindered from *working out their own Salvation*! and they have perished for ever, because they have thought that *bare using* of the Means of Grace was sufficient to save them. God is very much provoked to *Jealousie*, when we place *confidence* in our *own Endeavours*, or in the *Means of Grace* which he hath instituted. You are forward to hear the Word of God, but you must remember, that the Word of God will never be effectual unto your enlivening, unto your eternal Happiness, unless *God work like himself*, along with it. You must *hear*, but your Hope must not be in the Word *it self*, consider'd alone by it self; but your Hope must be in God, whose Word it is: For he hath said, *Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the Earth.*

2. When the *first Part of this Word* of God was *written*, and *given as a Rule of Faith, and Worship, and Life, it was perfect considering the Churches present State.* When *Israel* had no more than *Moses's* writings, that Revelation was perfect and sufficient, concerning the *will of the God of Israel*, considering the present state of *Israel*; therefore you read, *Num.* 10. 7. That *Moses was faithful in all the House of God.* God himself

ſelf gives him this Teſtimony: He ſet before *Iſrael, life and death*; and told them the *way*, how the one might be *eſcaped*, and how the other might be *obtained*, *Deut.* 30. 19. *Moſes* did faithfully deliver the *Moral Law*, that was firſt ſpoken by Gods *own Voice*, and afterwards writ with *his own Finger*, and which is indeed of *perpetual Obligation*. He likewiſe did faithfully deliver the *Ceremonial Law*, and the Ordinances of it, which was a *Pre-ſignification* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, what he was *to doe*, how he was to *ſuffer* and to *dye*, that he might make an Atonement for Sin, and that he might ſanctifie and cleanſe his Church and People. The Apoſtle, *Gal.* 3. 24. ſayes, That the *Law was our School-maſter, to bring us unto Chriſt*. The Moral Law doth *force* ſenſible Sinners unto Chriſt; becauſe from the Curſe of it they can be delivered no other way but by a Mediator: But the Ceremonial Law doth *inſtruct* concerning Chriſt, and doth notably diſplay his Sufferings, his Satisfaction that he made to the Juſtice of God, and the Benefits of his Crucifixion; and ſo it is our School-maſter to bring us unto Chriſt: And *Moſes* added the Judicial Law, which concerned *Iſrael* as they were a *Theocracy*, as they were a Common-wealth of Gods own Ordination and con-

contrivance. Thus the Word as a Rule of Faith and Life was perfect; and by this Word of God the Elect were instructed to turn to God, and at last brought safe to Glory.

3. When the *New Testament was added to the Old, then the Church had the most perfect, the most large and compleat Edition of the Word of God.* And this was suited unto the Churches *Age* of *greater maturity*, Heb. 1. 1. *God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake aforetime unto our Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.* And truly the Son, who is in the *bosom of the Father*, hath made the *fullest Declaration* of the Father, and of his Will, unto the Children of men. Christ telleth his Disciples how they were Priviledged in seeing him the *Messias*, and in hearing the Gospel from his Mouth, *Matth.* 13. 17. *Many Prophets and righteous men of old desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them.* Indeed that Light that did shine in the days of *Moses*, was a *perfect Light in a sence*; that is, it was a Light *converting and saving* those that did receive it, and that did walk according to it: but yet you must understand that since the *Sun of righteousness* is actually *risen*;

risen; there is *a greater light that shines now*, than ever shined *before* since the Fall of Man. Those things that *were hid from Ages and Generations, are revealed by the Gospel.* That *vail* that was upon the *face of Moses*, signifying the *obscurity* of the Mosaick Dispensation, that *vail is done away in Christ*, 2 Cor. 3. 12, 13. And in this Word, consisting of the Old and New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth before you all, as *full of Grace and Truth*, and as the *only Hope of Glory*. Understand your Priviledge; it is *such a Priviledge* that you enjoy *this day*, that was not afforded to the World till it was about *four thousand years old.*

4. The Word of God is so perfect, *that a further Revelation is needless, and not to be expected:* That Faith that was *once delivered unto the Saints*, it is to be *held fast* by Saints in all subsequent Ages. *That you earnestly contend*, saith the Apostle *Jude*, *ver.* 3. of his Epistle, *for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints.* This *Doctrine of Faith* ought to be held fast, and it is a compleat Doctrine. Let *this* go, and really you are *without God, without Christ*, without well grounded *hopes of Heaven.* Look into the Second Epistle of *John*, ver. 9. *Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the*

Doctrine

Doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the Doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. This Word that you find in the Bible, containing the Old Testament and the New, doth deliver *all to you* that God requires you to *believe in order to your Salvation*; and nothing is to be received as an *Article of Faith*, but what the written Word of God doth *propound to you.* And as it informs concerning mysteries of Faith, so concerning Duties that are to be practised; and the *Rule* is so compleat, that whosoever *walk according to it, Peace and Mercy shall be upon him*, Gal. 6. 16. In the Word of God are the *Credenda, Agenda, Petenda*; Truths to be Believed, Commands to be Obeyed, and Blessings to be Desired: *Nihil debet addi verbo quoad quantitatem, nihil reprehendi quoad qualitatem.* Nothing is to be added, as to *quantity*; nothing to be reprehended or found fault with, as to *quality.*

We are not to look for a *further Revelation* from Heaven it self. *If an Angel from Heaven should preach another Gospel*, we were bound *to conclude he were turned Apostate from the Truth*, and were to *call him accursed*, Gal. 1. 8. To talk of *Evangelium Spiritus*, the Gospel of the Spirit, which

which is to justle out the Gospel of Christ, and the Ordinances of it; is to talk of a pernicious delusion: The true Spirit *glorifies Christ*, inspired the Apostles infallibly to deliver the Doctrine and Ordinances of the Gospel. Therefore says the Apostle *John*, 1 Joh. 4. 6. *He that knoweth God heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us; hereby know we the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Errour.* The Ceremonial Law was abrogated, the *Jewish* Church State was *shaken* and broken; but the Gospel Church-state, is to *remain* unalterable unto the very end of the World, *Heb.* 12. 27. and shall continue in despight of all Enemies and Opposition.

5. The Word of God is so perfect, *as to bring Man home to God*, though by Sin and Unbelief he is departed, and run far away from Him. God calls in his Word to this very end, that Man might hear and turn to Him. And as to thousands and millions of Souls, this Word has a *probatum est*: Testimony that it has been *tried* and found an effectual means of Conversion. If we were caught up to the third Heaven, and could converse with the glorified Spirits of the Just; they would acknowledge they were *redeemed unto God* by *the Blood* of Christ, and that they were drawn

drawn to Christ by the Word of the Gospel; while they were hearing *this*, the Spirit entred into them, and made them true believing Converts. How many whose case seemed desperate, has this Word been a means to cure! Although the Miracles in Nature are ceased, which were necessary at first, that the Gospel might take root in the World, yet Miracles of Grace are still produced. The Spiritually *Blind* are made to see *the things that concern their Peace*. The Spiritually *Deaf* are made to hear the Voice of the Lord Jesus. The Spiritually *Lame* are made to walk, nay to run the ways of Gods Commandments. Nay the *Dead* in Sin are made to rise with Christ, and to live to Righteousness. How perfect is the Word, which Works such notable effects as these!

Christ tells his Disciples, whom he had impower'd to work Miracles, that in time they should *do greater works* than those, *Joh.* 14. 12. By these greater Works, *Origen*, and the *Fathers*, understand the Conversion of Kingdoms and Nations to the Christian Faith, to the true and living God. To raise a World that had been so long dead in wickedness, to cast Sathan, in so many places, out of his Temples, and throw down his Worship; to bring those

Souls

Souls to the Knowledge and Love of God, that were ſo groſly ignorant, and utterly eſtranged from him; this was a wonderful work indeed. Thoſe that are *far from God ſhall periſh*, Pſal. 73. 27. to be brought near to Him, is *good*; for 'tis to be ſecured from ruine, and to have the Lord to be our God and Bleſſedneſs; that's a perfect Word indeed, which brings us home to Him.

6. The Word is ſo perfect, that it directs us *how to walk with God, and to keep our ſelves in his Love.* To obtain the favour of God is *much*, to continue in his favour is *more* deſirable. The Word both *brings* and *keeps* man *near* to God. This Word does very much preſs Perſeverance, and ſhews the way how we may continue in well doing to the end. It requires us to *be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, and always to abound in the Work of the Lord*, 1 Cor. 15. 58. It bids us to *look to our ſelves, that we loſe not the things we have wrought, that we may receive a full reward*, 2 Joh. *v.* 8. It commands us *to hold faſt that which we have, that no man take our Crown*, Rev. 3. 11. The Apoſtle propounds himſelf as an example to be followed; and tells us, *Phil.* 3. 13, 14. This *one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to thoſe things*

things that are before: I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God. Here is an allusion to them that run in a race, who *do not look back* to see how much they have *already* run, but still look and run forward, that they may not miss the prize: *Things behind* may take in *earthly* things; which the Apostle had totally *cast behind* his back, so as never *principally* to regard them any more. Things behind may also take in his *past obedience*, which he does not consider and *remember* so as to *rest in it*, and leave off running and labouring.

And as the Word requires us to abide and walk with God, so it informs us how we may be sure to do it. It tells us of his *own right hand which* is ready to *uphold us*, that we may *follow hard after God*, Psal. 63. 8. It tells us, that the Lord is of *Power to establish* us, and to *keep us from falling*; and that if He does *hold us up, we shall be safe*, and shall have *respect unto his precepts continually*, Psal. 119. 117. The Word directs us to be *strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. 2. 1. who is the *Author and Finisher of our Faith*, the *same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*. The Word of God shews a greater security than *Adam* found in *Paradise*, or ma-

ny of the *Angels* found in *Heaven it ſelf*. There is a *New Covenant* made, and is to be laid hold upon. This Covenant is *everlaſting*, *ſure*, and admirably *well ordered*; 'tis eſtabliſhed by the Death and Blood of Chriſt the Mediator of it; 'tis confirmed by the *Oath of God*, and by the *Sacraments*, which are as it were two *broad Seals* of Heaven annexed to it. The faithful God will *keep Covenant on his part*, and he *engages* for his People that they *on their part* ſhall *keep his Covenant and his Teſtimonies*, Jer. 32. 40. *I will not turn away from them to do them good, and I will put my fear in their Hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me.*

7. The Word of God is ſo perfect, *as to guide and bring us ſafe to Glory*. Pſal. 73. 23, 24. *Nevertheleſs I am continually with thee, thou haſt holden me by my right hand; thou ſhalt guide me with thy Counſel, and afterwards receive to Glory.* This Word ſhews the *path of Life*, the *way Everlaſting*, that leads unto the Lords *glorious Preſence*, where there is *fulneſs of Joy, and Pleaſures for evermore.* None ever miſcarried, that follow'd this Words conduct. It came from Heaven, and it guides ſafely thither. *All fleſh is graſs, and all the Glory of man as the flower of the Field*; but

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the Word of God is *incorruptible*, and *abides for ever*; 'tis by *this* that Believers are wrought upon and raised, and fitted for a blessed Immortality. Their *Treasure, Hearts, and Conversations* are in *Heaven now*, while *themselves* are here on *Earth*, and they are growing *more meet* to be *partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. Admirable is the Perfection of the Word, that will infallibly bring all that Believe, and Love, and walk according to it, unto that blessed place and State; where there will be a Perfection of Light and of Delight, a perfection of Righteousness and Holiness, a perfection of Happiness and Joy; and all this will last in the highest perfection to Eternity. The Apostle commends those of *Ephesus*, of whom he takes his last leave, unto the *Grace* and to the *Word of God*: he knew very well that this was the way to be *built up to Glory*. Act. 20. 32. *And now Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them that are sanctified.* You see in what sense the Word of God is perfect.

In the second place, I am to *prove* by Arguments, the *Perfection* and *Suffisiency* of this Word of God.

1. The Perfection of the Word, is *very*

plainly asserted in Scripture: and if God himself affirms his Word to be perfect, that Man must needs be very bold and a great Lyar, who shall charge it with imperfection; my Text is an evident Testimony: *The Law of the Lord is perfect*, it makes the simple wise; and Converts sinful Souls to God. The Psalmist tells us, He had *seen an end of all Perfection*; and then adds, *but thy Commandment is exceeding broad*, Psal. 119. 96. The greatness of the Greatest, the riches of the Richest, the wisdom of the Wisest, he had lookt *through*, and lookt *beyond*; but the perfect Word of God was a *Direction*, a *Support* and a *Satisfaction* to Him, when every thing else failed. In this Word there is Wisdom, and Mercy, and Grace without bounds or limits. It cleanses the Hearts and Hands of Sinners; and is useful to Saints to the very end of their days, and makes their end Peace. Nay 'tis the Churches Heritage, which she lives Holily and well upon in all Generations.

The Apostle calls the VVord of God, a *perfect Law of Liberty*, Jam. 1. 25. *But whoso looketh into this perfect Law of Liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Work; this man shall be blessed in his deed.* 'Tis called a Law of *Liberty*, because the commands of the

the Word, ſo far as they are obeyed, do make the *Obedient free from ſin*; whoſe ſervice is indeed ſlavery, and being free from ſins *ſervitude*, they are no longer under *guilt*, the *curſe*, or *wrath*; but they have the liberty, the Priviledges of the Children of God. 'Tis called a *perfect* Law of Liberty, becauſe the Doer of it, that perſeveres in his Obedience, ſhall certainly be bleſſed in his deed. This Law does not only command, but Grace and Strength from the Spirit goes along with it, which cauſes it to be kept; and the fruit being unto Holineſs, the End will be Life eternal.

2. By the *Perfection of the Word in the Scriptures, the end of committing it to writing is obtained.* I grant there was a Church and the Word of God in it, before there was a Scripture; and then the Lord conveyed his Mind from Father to Son by Tradition; and this was more eaſie to be done when men were ſo very long lived, as to continue upon Earth very near a thouſand years. *Methuſelah* lived in the days of *Adam*, *Shem* in the days of *Methuſelah*; and *Iſaac* is obſerved to have been born, and grown up to be a man, before *Shem* was taken out of the World. But afterwards it pleaſed the Lord that Tradition ſhould be no longer truſted; but to prevent Corruption in Religion, we have a written Word, which all

are to give diligent heed to. The Word was written that *God might not be forgotten*; the Scripture being consulted, is the means to keep up the remembrance of him in all ages. The Apostle *Peter* tells us, he therefore set Pen to Paper, that *after his decease* the things of God might be had *always in remembrance*, 2 Pet. 1. 15. The Word was written, that Men *might not corrupt themselves*. *Moses* knew how prone the Children of *Israel* were to do thus, therefore he *wrote the Words of the Law in a Book*, that they might be a *witness against them*; and hinder their growing *stiff-necked*, and *rebellious against the Lord*, Deut. 31. 24, 26, 27.

Finally, the Word was written that *Religion it self might not be corrupted*, nor that go under Gods name which is none of his: Were it not for the Holy Scriptures, how easily might falshoods and fables and humane inventions be imposed upon us, and called the Mind of Christ by men of corrupt minds and destitute of the Truth! Now certainly, the Lord has caused *so much* to be written that may be *sufficient to attain his end in writing*; and if so, then it follows, that *all Doctrines of Faith*, and *Precepts* both for the ordering of our *Hearts* and *Lives*, are sufficiently declared in the Scripture. If the Scripture is given to prevent Corruption in Religion, the Scripture is perfect; that,

that

that Corruption may be prevented. If we ſhould ſuppoſe part of the Doctrines and Precepts of the Goſpel never to have been written; why was *leſs care* taken of *theſe* than of the other? How eaſily would *theſe* be forgotten and corrupted? and how could we be *ſatisfied* in their being *truly and ſincerely conveyed* to us?

3. Adding *to the VVord of God is moſt ſeverely forbidden*; therefore the VVord is perfect, *Prov.* 30. 6. *Add thou not unto his VVord, leaſt he reprove thee and thou be found a liar.* Thoſe that are thus preſumptuous to add, are *liars*, and therefore not to be believed by *others*; and they have reaſon to be afraid *themſelves*; for the Reproof and Rebukes of the Almighty are terrible. To inſtamp the Kings Head upon counterfeit Coyn, is no leſs than Treaſon. VVhen Doctrines and Ceremonies, which make *gain to be godlineſs*, and are inventions of Men, ſhall have Divinity ſtampt upon them, and pretend to be from Heaven; this is a daring Treaſon againſt the *higheſt Potentate*, the *great Lawgiver, who has Power to ſave and to deſtroy.* In the laſt book of Canonical Scripture, juſt at the cloſe, *plagues are* threatned *to be added* to any man who ſhall *add thereto*; and he that *ſhall take away* from it, God ſays *he will take away his part out of the Book of Life*, *Rev.* 22. 18, 19.

4. It is another proof of the VVords perfection, *that all Spirits are to be tried by it.* Satan himself can *transform himself into an Angel of light*, and his *Ministers* can look like the *Ministers of Righteousness*: There is great need then of Caution, 1 *Joh.* 4. 1. *Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God.* Now 'tis the VVord they are to be tried by. The Spirit of Truth and this VVord always agree; 'tis not a subjecting the Holy Ghost *to* the Scripture, when we observe the agreement between his Instructions, his Motions, *and* the Scripture, but we follow his own Direction in the case. It would not be a subjecting a Prince unto those general Instructions which he himself has given, whereby his mind might be known: but to examine messages even from the Prince, by those Instructions, would be VVisdom and Obedience in the Subject: The Spirit of errour and falshood may seem to agree with the VVord, but if the VVord be diligently heeded, the difference will be apparent. If the VVord were not perfect, but much of the Mind of God were really unwritten, the written VVord would be insufficient to be a trial and standard of right Doctrine; and it would not have been said, *To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this VVord it is because there is no light in them*, Isa. 8. 20.

5. The

5. The Word of God is perfect, *for wisdom to eternal Salvation is derived from it.* Indeed the Wisdom is from the Father of Lights, but the written Word is the Means of conveying it, 2 *Tim.* 3. 14, 15. *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* What the Apostles taught, was committed to writing; the great Doctrine of Faith in Christ Jesus, is here mention'd: and this written Word must needs be perfect, which was able to make those that received it, wise unto Salvation. The Wisdom in the Gospel, is *so accounted* by them that are *perfect*; for this VVisdom excells the *policy* of *Princes, that come to nought*; and is ordained unto the *Glory* of Believers, 1 *Cor.* 2. 6, 7. *Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this World, nor of the princes of this World, which come to nought; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery; even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the VVorld to our Glory.*

6. The *Effect of the VVord of God proves its perfection,* for it *makes us perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*; here is right *Doctrine,* to inform the Judgment of what is

is true; here is *reproof* and conviction of what is errour and falshood: Here is *correction* for miscarriages in practice; and *instruction* in the way of *righteousness*, 2 Tim. 3, 16, 17. *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.* If by the *Man of God*, you mean the *godly Man*, the Scriptures Perfection is evident, in being a Means so throughly to furnish him with Light and Grace, to do all the good works his Lord requires. If by the *Man of God*, you understand the *Minister of Christ*; the Perfection of the Scripture is the *more* evident. For those that are called *Stars* in Christs hand, *Angels* of the Churches, *Labourers* in the Lords Vineyard, may from the *written word* be *throughly furnished*, both to teach and to do what is required to *save themselves and those that hear them.*

In the third place, I am to give you the Reasons why the *Perfection* of the Word is mentioned, when *Conversion* is spoken of.

1. To intimate the *Imperfection of the Light of Nature.* This Light discovers ma-

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ny things; and to do those things which are contrary to the Light of Nature, is to do very wickedly: but can it be said, that this *Light of Nature is perfect, working Grace, and converting the Soul?* The Heathens that had onely this Light, and were without Supernatural Revelation; did speak several things excellently concerning God; they had a Notion of another World, of the Souls Immortality, and of Rewards and Punishments hereafter; and they give remarkable Counsels as to Wisdom and Folly, Vice and Vertue. But those of them that had the greatest Parts and Learning, the sharpest and most piercing eyes to see most, they saw nothing of *God manifested in the Flesh*; they understood nothing of *Redemption by Price*; of *Gods purchasing his Church with his own Blood*, Act. 20. 28.

The Light of Nature is insufficient to shew the way to Heaven. How God will deal with these Heathens, 'tis hard to determine. *Zuinglius* indeed asserts, That when we come to Heaven, we shall see *utrumque Adamum, Redemptum & Redemptorem*; both the *Adams*, the Redeemer, and him that was redeemed; the Prophets, the Apostles: And then he adds, That *Aristides*, the *Cato's*, and the *Scipio's*, and such vertuous Men among the Heathen, will be found

found in Heaven alſo. *Calvin* calls this *præpoſterum miſericordiam*, a prepoſterous Mercy: becauſe the Apoſtle tells us, *thoſe who have ſinn'd without Law, ſhall alſo periſh without Law*, Rom. 2. 12. What is to be ſaid in this caſe? To affirm, that *any of them are ſaved*, who never heard of a Saviour; is to affirm what is hard to prove: to ſay that *they are all damned*, will be a bold Sentence: The Apoſtle tells us, that *thoſe who are without*, *God judges*, 1 Cor. 5. 13. and to Gods Judgment we muſt leave them.

2. The Perfection of the Word is mentioned in the work of Converſion, to ſhew that the *Works of God do need his Words expoſition upon them.* 'Tis the Word which rightly diſcovers God in the Works of Creation, *Heb.* 11. 3. *Through Faith we underſtand that the Worlds were framed by the Word of God; ſo that things which are ſeen, were not made of things which do appear.* The Scripture ſhews how the Lord is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the Beginning and the End of all things; that *per ſcalam creaturarum*, by the Ladder of the Creatures we may aſcend unto the *Gracious and Alſufficient Creator.* The Word expounds the

The whole Volume of Nature, would ſignifie little to Man; were it not for the Scriptures commentary upon it.

the Works of *Providence*; it puts such a Language into *Mercies*, that these Demonstrations of divine *goodness lead unto Repentance*. And the Word makes the *Rod* to utter *such a voice*, that the *Uncircumcised heart is humbled*, the Sinner *accepts of the punishment of his Iniquity*, Lev. 26. 41. and turns unto that God that smites him.

3. The Perfection of the Word is mentioned in the Work of Conversion, that *Sinners may use and value the Word as a Means sufficient*. He that is sick of the Plague, how willingly does he use a Remedy that is sufficient for the cure of the Pestilence; and which has cured thousands, and that never failed to heal any that would but take it. Never was there a Plague in the World, so universal, so contagious, so deadly as Sin is: O all ye sinful, diseased and lost Souls! hear, and with all seriousness apply the Word of God, that ye may be healed, and that being healed ye may live and not dye for ever! The remedy is perfect, it *certainly* works for *life*, if it be *but received*; he that *believes*, and yields subjection to the Gospel, *shall be saved*, Mar. 16. 16. I confess, the refusing of the remedy, will heighten the disease, and make the death more dreadful: He that *believes not*, shall receive the greater *damnation*.

4. The

4. The Perfection of the Word is mentioned in the work of Converſion, that the *Preachers of the Word may be encouraged.* Were this Word a weak imperfect thing, the Diſpencers of it would have the leſs heart to labour; but they have no reaſon to be *aſhamed* or diſcouraged, but to glory in the Goſpel of Chriſt, ſince 'tis *the Power of God to Salvation*: And let him be *Jew* or *Gentile*, *high* or *low*, a *leſs Sinner* or the *greateſt*; if he receives the Word with Faith, the Preachers pains will be to good purpoſe. The Apoſtle inſults over all the *VViſdom of this VVorld*, as that which is *poor*, and *fooliſh*, and *helpleſs* as to a *better World*, 1 Cor. 1. 20. *Where is the wiſe? where is the Scribe? where is the diſputer of this world?* The *Jewiſh Synagogue*, where *Moſes* was *truſted in*, and *Chriſt rejected*; the *Greek Academy*; could neither of them ſhew the *way of Salvation*: hath not *God made fooliſh the VViſdom of this VVorld?* But then he magnifies the Word of God, that reveals Chriſt Jeſus; becauſe herein the *Power* and *VViſdom of God* were *ſavingly* made manifeſt, 1 Cor. 1. 23, 24. *VVe preach Chriſt crucified, to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.*

5. The Perfection of the Word is mentioned

tioned in the Work of Converſion, *that Saints may ſtill be improving it unto a further turning*: Where's the Convert, *in whom, and for whom*, the Word of God has *wrought ſo much*, that it *can* work *no more*? You that have moſt experienced its power and goodneſs, may ſtill feel a further efficacy. The Word is perfect, and you ſhould be preſſing forward to be perfected by it; ſtill your *Light* ſhould grow *clearer*, your *Faith ſtronger*, your *love more abundant*, and *patience ſhould have a more perfect work in you, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*, Jam. 1. 4. Still you ſhould be more low in your own ſight, the Grace of Chriſt more glorious in your eyes; the World ſhould be more under your feet, and Heaven be the matter of your thoughts, and hopes, and joy. You that are *weak* ſhould reſemble *David*, you that are *ſtrong* as *David*, ſhould be *like the Angels of God*, aſpiring unto, not only *Evangelical*, but an *Angelical* and *heavenly Perfection*.

I come in the laſt place to the *Application*, The Uſes are theſe following.

USE. I. Of *Caution*. The Perfection of the Word of God, ſhould make you,

1. To take heed of that *Enthuſiaſtick Spirit, that pretends not to need this Word*: That *Light within* which makes the *Light*

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of the VWord to be contemned, is certainly *Darkneſs*; and if *the Light within you be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs?* Mat. 6. 23. *Solomon* tells us plainly, that *the Commandment is a Lamp, and the Law is Light, and the reproofs of inſtruction are the way of Life*, Prov. 6. 23. You will miſs the way of Life, unleſs this Light be followed. He is moſt unreaſonably *wiſe in his own eyes*, who imagines he *knows ſo much*, that *God himſelf* by his Word *can teach him* no more: the truth is, he *knows nothing as he ought to know*, his Knowledg is but a deluſive dream, his ignorance real and deſtructive.

Heed not, but reſiſt the *Spirit* that *injects undervaluing thoughts* of the Word of God; for that cannot be the *true Spirit* which did *endite it*. If once you *reject the VWord of the Lord*, alas, what *underſtanding is in you*? Jer. 1. 9. The groſſeſt and moſt *damnable errours* will impoſe upon you as *truths*; the moſt *carnal licentiouſneſs*, which is the *bondage of corruption*, will call it ſelf *Chriſtian liberty*; Sins will be made *no Sins*, and Duties *no Duties*; you will allow your ſelves in the *omiſſion* of Gods *Ordinances*, as things *below* Saints of ſo *high a Stature* as you will deem your ſelves; you will be toſt about *with every wind of Doctrine*; your

Heads

Heads and *Hearts* too will be *strongly* possest by the *evil Spirit*; and having run through all Forms of Religion, you may at length cast off the very Profession and Form of Godliness, and degenerate even into the *rankest Atheism*, living, and, oh dreadful, *dying* also *without God*!

2. Take heed of those who *charge the written Word of God with Imperfection*: whatever pains such may take to make Proselytes of you, certainly they are not likely to *turn you to God*, who endeavour to instill a *prejudice* into you *against his Word*: They that disparage the Holy Scripture as unnecessary, as obscure, as onely occasionally written, and not fully declaring the Mind of God, whatever they pretend, *really* the Scripture is *against* them, and their false Opinions and carnal Interest; and that's the true ground of their quarrel with it. Open the door for unwritten Traditions, and at that Door the foulest Heresies will presently enter, and pretend to great Antiquity, nay to Divine Authority. St. *Cyprian*, Epist. 74. tells us plainly, That *that is to be allowed as an holy and divine tradition, that is commanded in the Gospel, or contained in the Epistles or Acts of the Apostles*. This Man was a Father

Unde ergo ista Traditio? utrum de dominica & evangelica auctoritate descendens, an de Apostolorum mandatis atque epistolis veniens? Ea quippe facienda quæ scripta sunt, Deum testatur. Si ergo in Evangelio præcipitur, aut in Apostolorum Epistolis aut Actibus continetur, observetur hæc divina & salutaris traditio. Cyprian, *Epist.* 74. Pompeio fratri.

very Ancient, and a Martyr too for the Faith of Christ. Keep stedfast and attentive to the Word of God. They who would lead you into Paths no where in Scripture to be found, would mislead you. *Christ is to be heard*, and 'tis in his Word that his voice sounds; his own *sheep know his voice*, and *follow him*; but *a Stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of Strangers*, Joh. 10. 4, 5. The Apostle signifies, that they who teach a *voluntary humility*, the *worshipping of Angels*, the *neglect of the body*; or any other *Will-worship*, though there be never *so great a shew of wisdom* in it, they do but go about to *beguile others*, and are *vainly puft up with a fleshly mind* themselves, because these things have no warrant from the Word of God, *Col.* 2. 18. 23.

3. Take heed of of a *profane contempt* of this Word of God, which is such a perfect Remedy, and which you all do so much need. What are you more afraid of the *Medicine* than the *Malady*? More afraid of *that Word* which is such a means to *turn you*, than of *Sin* which is *ready to ruine* you? To throw your Silver and Gold about the Streets, to burn your Houses down to the ground, setting Fire to them with your own hands, to cast your Food which you should live upon, unto the Dogs, is nothing neer so pernicious a madness, as to contemn the Word of God, the great Means of

of Converſion and Salvation. Preferr not the *Curſe* before the *Bleſſing*, when both are ſet before you: *Chuſe not death*, when if you are but willing to live Holily and Happily, *Eternal Life* will be your own. *Eſau* is branded as a *profane* and fooliſh Wretch; who for *one morſel of Meat, ſold his Birth-right*: Heb. 12. 16. And what folly and profaneneſs will you diſcover, if you mind only the vanities of this World, *the faſhion* of which *paſſes away*; and neglect all that Grace and Glory, whereof in the Word of God you have ſo full and compleat a diſcovery? Where is the *Faith*, where is the *Reaſon*, where is the *Self-love* of that Man, who deſpiſeth a perfect Word, which perfectly ſhewes the way to an everlaſting Kingdom? *Conſider this, and ſhew your ſelves Men, O ye Tranſgreſſors.*

USE. II. *Of Counſel*, and that in ſeveral particulars.

1. Take notice of the *Divinity* of the Word *in its Perfection.* God *himſelf* is Perfect, his *works* are perfect, and ſo is his *Word*: The Words Perfection ſhews its Original: Divine Wiſdom, Holineſs, Grace, and Mercy, how illuſtrious are they in the Scripture! The Laws from Mount *Sinai* are ſuch, in both the Tables, as ſpeak more than what is *Humane*, more than the *diſpoſition of Angels*; and evidently ſhew that the Wiſe, the Good, the Righte-

ous Jehovah was the Legislator: The Mysteries of the Gospel are the *deep things of God*, 1 Cor. 10. 11. which could never have entred into Mans Heart and Understanding, if the Spirit of God had not revealed them. Here is a Depth of counsel and knowledg; an highth of Love which was from Eternity, which shall never change in time, and which will continue unalterable to Eternity: Precepts are plain and full, Promises precious, threats though severe, yet needful. *One God* is made known, and *one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. 2. 5. Distinctions, *ubi lex non distinguit*, where the Word distinguishes not, are in no wise to be admitted. It is *through the* Son, not by Angels and Saints in Heaven, that we *have access, by one Spirit unto the Father*, Eph. 2. 18. This is the true Worship, this is the right way, keep in it and be safe. There are several *external motives* of credibility, and there are *intrinsick evidences* in the *word it self*, that *'tis of God*, and among the rest, its *Perfection* is a *great one*. And 'tis observable, that they *who deny its Perfection*, do make its *Authority* to be *dependent* and *precarious*.

2. Admire the *Perfection and fulness of the written Word*. It was a noble saying of * *Tertullian*, *Adoro Scripturæ plenitudinem*: I adore the fulness of this

* *Scripturas esse docuit Hermogenis officina, si non est scriptum, timetur. Væ illud adjicientibus, aut detrahentibus destinatum.* Tertul. lib. adversus Hermog. cap. 22.

the Scripture. We need no more than what is there upon record, to bring us to the *true knowledg of God*, and to make us *increaſe* in *ſpiritual underſtanding*; and the more we look into the Scripture, we ſhall ſtill ſee *more* and *more in it*, to raiſe our admiration, to take our Hearts and our Affections. The Scripture is a *Mine*, out of which comes nothing but what is *Sound* and *Pure*; helps to underſtand it, are to be valued: But by theſe helps we muſt take heed of being drawn off from it ſelf. This Mine is farther and farther to be *ſearched into*, for we are to be *growing in Grace and Knowledge* all our days, 2 *Pet.* 3. *ult.* And *Solomon* tells us, that this ſearching will not be loſt labour, *Prov.* 2. 4, 5, 6, 7. *If thou ſeekeſt her as Silver, and ſearcheſt for her as for hid treaſure; then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledg of God; for the Lord giveth wiſdom, out of his Mouth cometh Knowledge and Underſtanding; he layeth up ſound wiſdom for the righteous, he is a Buckler to them that walk uprightly.*

3. You that live under the New Teſtament Diſpenſation, be *very thankful that the written Word is ſo very copious and ſo large.* To have ſuch a compleat Declaration of the Mind of God by his own Son, was a Priviledge which the Old Teſtament Believers wiſht for, but did not enjoy. What Moles are they who are onely buſie and working in the Earth, and for Earth-

ly things, and regard not the clear ſhining of the Sun of Righteouſneſs! To be deaf and regardleſs when God ſpeaks ſo much to us; not to underſtand when he ſpeaks ſo fully and ſo plainly, is inexcuſable; but to have Knowledg and to ſin againſt it, and to *detain the truth in unrighteouſneſs*, is inexcuſable much more; here is Ingratitude and Preſumption together, and the more ſtripes are threatned and deſerved, *Luke* 12. 47. *And that Servant that knew his Lords will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes.*

4. Search *the VVord of God*, be *much*, that you may be *mighty* in the Scriptures. By this weapon you may defend your ſelves againſt the ſubtileſt Enemies of the truth, nay againſt the *old ſubtle Serpent* himſelf. It was not an unwritten, but a *written word* that Chriſt produced, when he was aſſaulted by the *Tempter*, *Mat.* 4. 4, 7, 10. It was an Injunction of our Lord himſelf, *Joh.* 5. 39. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life.* It was a *right thought* that the Scriptures *direct* unto Life Eternal, but it was a *preſumptuous thought* in the *Phariſees*, to imagine Eternal Life was *theirs*; ſince inſtead of building upon the Foundation Stone in *Sion*, they ſtumbled at it. But the Injunction it ſelf is of great Moment.

The Scriptures are *Gods own Books*, and the *onely*

onely Books he has in the World. Every ones Breaſt ſhould be like *Nepotian*'s, *Bibliotheca Chriſti*, A *Library in which theſe Books ſhould be kept ſafely.* To be acquainted more intimately with the Word, is the way to be better acquainted with God; and the conſequent of this acquaintance, is Peace. *Job.* 22. 21. *Acquaint now thy ſelf with him, and be at peace, thereby good ſhall come to thee.* By Searching of the Scriptures, the Underſtanding is improved, the Heart is purified, the Life is regulated. This Book is indeed the *thankful Glaſs*, that mends the Eyes of all that rightly look into it. It was an honeſt Diſtich of one:

Longâ & aſſiduâ meditatione Scripturarum, pectus ſuum fecerat Bibliothecam Chriſti. Hyeronym. *de* Nepotiano.

Ex aliis paleæ viles, hinc grana leguntur
Aurea, tu paleas linquito grana lege.

Which another thus Engliſhes.

Mens Books with worthleſs chaff are ſtor'd,
Gods Scripture Golden grains afford:
Reject the chaff, and ſpend thy pains
In gleaning up theſe golden Grains.

5. Pray for *the Spirit* who endited the Word, that he *may interpret it, and lead you into the underſtanding of it.* He is called the *Spirit of wiſdom and Revelation*, Eph. 1. 17. He reveals the Goſpel, he enlightens the eyes of the Underſtanding. True Wiſdom is the ſpecial Gift of the Holy Ghoſt. It is an encouragement in Prayer, that the beſt things may be asked

with the greateſt confidence. The Gift of the Spirit comprehends the beſt things of all; doubt not of Gods willingneſs to beſtow it, *Luk.* 11.13. *If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts to your Children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit unto them that ask him?* It is not a notional Knowledge, which many Hypocrites excell in, that you ſhould content your ſelves with. Such Knowledge being alone, *puffs up* him that has it, 1 *Cor.* 8. 1. and diſturbing Striſe and contention follows upon Pride and High-mindedneſs: ſuch Knowledge aggravates Sin in the careleſs and carnal Profeſſor, and will exceedingly inflame his Reckoning in the day he muſt give account of himſelf to God.

It is *true wiſdom*, a *Spiritual underſtanding* of the Scriptures, that you ſhould cry for. When the Spirit of God diſcovers a *truth* to you, with what Satisfaction will your Mind receive it! When the Spirit ſhews you your *Duty*, how Righteous, how reaſonable, and what a Priviledge does it appear? The Spirits *Light* and *Strength* go *together*, ſo that the Will is inclined to a compliance, when the enlightned Soul does underſtand the Will of God. When the Spirit applies a *Promiſe* to you, how will your Faith be confirmed! how will you abound in Hope! and how full of ſweeteſt peace will your hearts be, while you ſecurely reſt on the God of Truth, whoſe *VVord will endure* when

Heaven

Heaven and Earth shall pass away, Isa. 26. 3, 4. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect Peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength.*

6. Let your *Knowledge of the Word of God be more perfect.* Alas how little do we know, of what may be known! and what we do know, how much better may we know it! Though the Children of God, are *Children of Light, and Children of the Day*; yet there are great remainders of darkness in some of them, and some remainders in all. This remaining Ignorance is both their Sin and Misery, by reason of which, Satan their subtle enemy has many times great advantage against them. Labour after a more perfect Knowledge of God, his Son, his Truth, his Will; his Word informs you of all. If the Happiness of Heaven lies so much in a *beatifical seeing*, Oh use all possible intention of mind, that you may *see more and more*, even while you are here on Earth! True Knowledge will debase the idolized World, and make it *nothing* in your eyes; and it wil humble you, and make you perceive that really you are *worse than nothing*. How does a clearer Knowledge of God make holy *Job*, much more humble than ever, *Job* 42. 5, 6. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the Ear, but now mine Eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhorr my self, and repent in Dust and Ashes.*

The

The better you know *the Lord*, the more you will *Love*, and *Fear*, and *Praise* him. The better you know *his Christ*, you cannot chuse but still *more highly prize* him, and your Hearts will *cleave to him* with the fuller *purpose*. The better you know his *Commands*, the more they will be your *Counsellours*, your *longing*, your *delight*, and your *Songs in the house of your Pilgrimage*: The better you know the *Cross of Christ*, you will be the less offended at it, the *heaviest Afflictions* will be made *light of*, when compared with a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

7. Let your *Love be greater and more perfect, to this perfect VVord of God*. The World indeed *hates this VVord*, because *it testifies* against them, *that their works are evil*, and will have an *ill end*. True love to it will argue spiritual Life by it, and that it has been effectual to turn and change our very Hearts. Love to the Word, distinguishes the *true Church* from the *Antichristian* Society. Of these 'tis said, because they *received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved; God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye, that they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had Pleasure in Unrighteousness*, 2 Thes. 2. 10, 11, 12. All the excellent properties of the Word, and the wonderful effects of it should take your Hearts, and still be increasing your affection to it, and the stronger

er your love is, the greater will be your care to keep it, *Pſal.* 119. 167. *My Soul hath kept thy Teſtimonies, and I love them exceedingly.* Love will make you labour hard in the work which the Word commands, and yet it will ſo overcome the difficulty, that hard labour ſhall become eaſie.

It was a ſaying of *Bernard*, *Is rectè divinas Scripturas legit, qui verba vertit in opera.* He rightly reads the Holy Scriptures, who turns *VVords into VVorks.* Love will mightily conſtrain you to this, 'twill make you *doers* and *bleſſed in your deed:* Love the Word of God, as a *Malefactour* would love to *read his pardon*, after the Sentence of Death has been paſt upon him. Love the Word, as a *Debtour* would love to read his *general and full diſcharge*, which delivers him out of Priſon, and ſecures him from the danger of being arreſted any more. Love the Word, as a *Sick man* would love to read a *Receipt*, preſcribing a medicine that would certainly *cure his diſtemper* and *ſave his Life.* Finally, love the Word, as an *Heir* would love to read over a *Teſtament* in which is left him a rich Eſtate, a moſt plentiful Inheritance. In the VVord of God, you find a pardon, a diſcharge from all debts, by your great, your ſufficient Surety; here is ψυχῆς παυσάρμακον, the Souls univerſal remedy. And the Pſalmiſt ſays, *Pſal.* 119. 111. *Thy Teſtimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoycing of my Heart.*

8. Ne-

8. Never be *ashamed of this Word of God, which is so perfect, and worthy to be owned.* With your *Hearts believe it unto Righteousness,* with your Mouths *Confess it to Salvation.* Be not concerned that the World accounts the Word foolishness, fear not either their reviling or their rage; their *hands* are *weak* considering how strong your helper is, and their *Judgements weaker.* Stand *fast in the Faith, and quit you like men, be strong,* 1 Cor. 16. 13. Your Lord will be much pleased to see you *valiant for the Truth,* and no less than a *Crown of Life* shall be the *reward* of *Faithfulness unto the Death.* But if you *are ashamed of Christ and of his word before Men; he will be ashamed of you before his Father and all his Holy Angels,* Mar. 8. 38. And how great and everlasting then will your shame and confusion be!

USE III. Of *Exhortation.* Since the Word is perfect, let me *exhort you all unto Perfection.* The *legal Perfection* of *Adam* in Innocency, you cannot reach, since the fall keeps all his Posterity *short* of it: hear the Apostle confessing and bewailing; *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,* Phil. 3. 12. But evangelical Perfection is possible, 'tis necessary, 'tis actually found in all true Converts. In legal Perfection it may be said ἐν ἐσῳ ἁμαρτία, there is *no Sin.* In evangelical Perfection it may be said ἐν ἐσῳ ὅλος, there is no predominant

nant Hypocriſie. In the former there is no ſin *at all*, in the latter there is *no Sin loved and allowed*. In the one *every* command is *kept*, in the other there is *grief* when *any* command is *broke*, and a true *Deſire* after *Grace* to keep *every Commandment better*. When I exhort you to Perfection, I mean three things. That you would be of a *perfect Heart*. That you would *walk in a perfect way*. That you would *ſtand perfect and compleat in all the will of God*.

1. Let your *Hearts be perfect*. The Heart is the very *Seat of Sincerity*, if it be *not here*, 'tis *no where*; 'tis not in the eye, or tongue, or hands, or feet; if the Heart remain as it was by Nature without a change, and is ſtill wicked, ſenſual and earthly; the VVords and actions though never ſo good, ſignifie and avail nothing; nay the better the VVords and Actions are, the greater is the Hypocriſie and Diſſimulation. There are ſeveral *excellent ingredients* in this Perfection of Heart, which I would preſs upon the Hearts and Conſciences of All.

1. Let your Hearts ſhew themſelves perfect *by ſetting God alwaies before them. Walk before me*, ſays God to *Abraham*, *and be perfect*, Gen. 17. 1. The perfect Heart is ſenſible that Gods eye looks into it, and ſees all that is in it; therefore its eye is alſo upon God, and as there is an *holy awe* of God upon it, ſo 'tis not ſatisfied without his *approbation*. Upright *David* cryes, but, *O Lord, thou haſt ſearched me and known me, thou*

thou underſtandeſt my thoughts afar off, Pſal. 139. 1, 2. Thoughts include all the affections, workings and inclinations of the Heart, all theſe were open and naked unto the Eye of Gad. And *David* looks to his Heart accordingly, and he begs that the evil of his Heart might be more plainly diſcover'd to him, that his Heart might be more throughly cleanſed.

2. Let your Hearts be perfect, in being *truely willing and very ſtudious to pleaſe that God* with whom you have to do. The perfect Heart ſees 'tis highly reaſonable that *Mans Will* in all things ſhould be obedient unto *Gods*, ſince the VVill of God is ſo righteous, good and holy; ſince *He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*, to any thing that is hurtful, *Jam.* 1. 13. to pleaſe the Lord ſhould be the Pleaſure of your very Souls. You ſhould hate *every abominable thing which he hates*, and what he *delights* in ſhould always be *choſen*.

3. Let your Hearts be perfect, in *refuſing to have a liking, reſpect and regard to any iniquity*. *David* manifeſted his uprightneſs, and as a perfect man he was regarded, and his *Prayer heard*, becauſe he did not regard iniquity in his Heart, *Pſal.* 66. 18, 19. Iniquity in the Heart *is to be regarded*, ſo as to be humbled for it, weary of it, and bewail it, and to endeavour by all means to mortifie and purge it away; 'tis *not to be regarded*, ſo as to cover and excuſe it, ſo as ſecretly to delight in it, and reſolve to ſpare it

Eſpeci-

Especially let your Hearts set themselves with full bent against that which may be called εὐπερίστατος ἁμαρτία, the *Sin that does most easily beset you*, Heb. 12. 1. from hence is the greatest guilt, defilement, danger; the Sin that by reason of your Constitutions, Callings, Age, and the bad Customs of the Places where you live, have been most insinuating into your Affection, and aptest to prevail; should be abandon'd with a special and peculiar Detestation and abhorrency. *I was upright before thee*, says *David*, *and I kept my self from mine iniquity*, Psal. 18. 23. possibly he may mean *revenge upon Saul*, which he had again and again opportunity to *take*, which not only those that were with him, but Corruption of Nature might *prompt him to*; but the true Grace which was in him, was *peremptory against*.

4. Let your Hearts be perfect, in *being found in Gods Statutes*. Let them all be approved, for all are the Lords, and all are worthy. This argues a rectified Judgment indeed, when every Precept is lookt on as right, and that the keeping of it, is not only a Duty, but a kindness to him that keeps it. *I esteem all thy Commandments*, says the Psalmist, *concerning all things to be right*, *and I hate every false way*, Psal. 119. 128. Though there be an *Election of some*, yet if there be a *Reprobation* of other Commandments; the Heart is not sound. It cannot have a *right respect* to *any* unless it have a *general respect*

spect to *all*. The Apostle tells us, that partial obedience will not pass, *Jam.* 2. 10. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* An allowed neglect of *one* command, argues that none are kept because they are *Gods*, and that *he* may be *pleased*, because he has been pleased to injoyn one as well as another.

5. Let your Hearts be perfect, in consenting *to the Sanctification of all your Faculties and Powers:* Desire that your *whole Souls* should be renewed by the Grace of God, and highly value *every Grace* of the Spirit. Every Power in you needs Renovation, and every Grace of the Holy Ghost excells in worth all things that are Temporal. Faith, Love, Fear, Hope, Meekness, Patience, Temperance, Humility and the rest, how much *better* are they than the *best things* of this present *evil World!* And when any new degrees are added to the Grace you have, conclude that you are *very highly favoured.*

6. Let your Hearts be perfect, in having *right designs, and making God your end.* He is his own end, and with good reason, for there is nothing so good, so high as He. Let him be your end in all you do. Still let your Hearts be designing to extol him, by more high and suitable apprehensions, by more enlarged and raised affections; by a more profound Submission to him. Design that others may be brought to Honour him, and desire *his Name may be*

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lowed all the Earth over, and that *his Kingdom* may be advanced above all other Monarchies whatsoever. Thus your hearts should be perfect.

2. I exhort you to *walk in a perfect way*. Walk not according to the *course of this World, after the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that works in the Children of disobedience*; Eph. 2. 2. Walk not as those Professors did, of whom the Apostle speaks with Weeping, Phil. 3. 18, 19. *Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even Weeping, that they are the Enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, and who mind earthly things.* But do you take heed of imitating such patterns, be sure to shun their pernicious paths: Follow better examples, walk in a perfect way: Thus to walk implys *three* things.

1. Walk *humbly with God*; break not the *first Table* of the Law; let not onely the Lord himself, but his Worship, his Ordinances, his Name, his Sabbaths be dear unto you. Neglect not *publick Ordinances* in the *Sanctuary*, private in the *Family*, secret in the *Closet*: Perform every Duty as *before* God; Perform every Duty as *to* Him.

2. Make *great Conscience also of doing your Duty towards Men.* Be perfectly true and just in all your dealings with all. To defraud, to deceive, to overreach, any way to be unjust to your Neighbour, is to injure and engage the Justice of God against you. Be very merciful to those that are in distress and misery; and if *your Souls* are drawn out towards them, indeed to compassionate their case, purses and hands will be open for their relief: Especially pity those that are in *Sin* as well as *Misery*; and are in the worse condition, because neither Sin nor Misery are perceived. I beseech you also be very exact

in doing the Duties of your *places and relations*; that you may glorifie the Perfect Word of God, the perfect rule you walk by; in being Parents, Children, Subjects, Husbands, Wives, Masters, Servants, with a *None-such*; none that are without the Word being in any of these relations comparable to you.

3. Do *not injury, but your duty towards your selves.* Employ not your Eyes, your Tongues, your Hands, or any of your Members, to your own hurt, and defiling. Do not by uncleanness, *sin against your own bodies*, 1 Cor. 6. 18. Do not by Surfeiting and Drunkenness, load them with diseases, and hasten them to the Grave. Let not Covetousness and carking care make you to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the Bread of sorrows; nor cause you to be uncharitable to the needy, and to grudg what is convenient to your selves. Thus *walk in a perfect way.*

3. In the third and last place, I exhort you *to stand perfect and compleat in all the Will of God*, Col. 4. 12. His Perfect Word should alwaies be heeded. The *good* and *honest Heart*, receives this Word, *understands it*, and how safe 'tis to be *guided by it even unto death*; and therefore *brings forth fruit with patience*, Luke 8. 15. Why with *patience?* Because *patience is very requisite*, to overcome both the *difficulty of duty*, and *trouble*, and *Persecution* upon the *account of duty*. Heb. 10. 36. *Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the Will of God ye might receive the Promise.* Persevere in the Perfect Word, in the good, the acceptable, the perfect Will and Work of God, unto the end; hereby manifest you are Disciples and Servants indeed. And an happy Eternity will satisfie you; *that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

VS

USE. IV. Of *Consolation.* The Perfection of the Word of God, serves for *much comfort to the Church of Christ, and all Converts the true Members of it.* The Grounds of Consolation are these.

1. Wherever *this Church* is, this *perfect Word of God shall certainly be.* The Word may sometimes be Eclipsed in a Church, but never quite extinguished. Indeed when a Church is unchurched, the Word goes. When the Candlestick is removed, the light in that place is put out. But suppose a Church to remain, there will be the Word, by which 'twas gather'd, and which is a means also to govern and preserve it, in spight of all opposite Policy and Power. Spiritual hunger is a blessed thing, it never ends in *Starving*, but in Satisfaction, *Mat.* 5. 6. The sincere Members of the true Church, have this hunger; therefore they shall more or less have the food of the Word to sustain and strengthen them. The Great and Good Shepherd will some way or other provide for the Sheep of his Pasture.

2. This Church shall have *the Spirit along with the Word.* We may as well suppose a living Body without a Soul, as a true Church of Christ without his Spirit: The Spirit is promised and given to the Church to abide there for ever, *Joh.* 14. 16, 17. *I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the World cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* Now *where the Spirit of the Lord is,* how effectual is the Word! what *Light*, what *Liberty*, what *Power*, what *Peace* is there! The Spirit makes the Means of Grace to attain their end: He fills Ordinances with an Heavenly vertue; he quickens the Dead, enlarges the straite-

ned Heart, causes fruit to be brought forth plentifully; he *comforts* the true Converts, and *stablishes them in every good word and work.*

3. It's matter of Consolation, that in this perfect Word of God, there is *wisest and safest counsel given*, Prov. 6. 22. *When thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, when thou awakest it shall talk with thee.* So Prov. 3. 23. *Thou shalt walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.* This Word counsels Converts against evil Men, evil Women, evil Angels, an evil World, and against every evil work: It never gave bad counsel unto any. The Counsels of the Word are best with reference to *Eternity*; and with reference to *Time* also: It bids us *pass the time of our sojourning here in fear*; to live as *Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth*, that we may be less concerned and disturbed, and keep more *unspotted from the World.* It bids us *to walk uprightly*, that we *may walk surely.* It informs us that all carnal Policy which is joyned with a contempt of God and Religion, is onely a cunning contrivance to undo our selves; but 'tis *the fear of the Lord* that is the *beginning of Wisdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is understanding.*

4. In this Perfect Word of God, a *compleat Armour is found to secure Converts against the Enemies of their Salvation*; Eph. 6. 13. *Wherefore take unto you the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.* This Armour is to be valued indeed, which is *Armour of proof*, which secures us against the worst and most powerful Adversaries; which certainly defends and makes us victorious, when fighting for Eternal life; when those against whom these Enemies prevail, will surely dy the everlasting Death. The Apostle speaks at large

of

of the pieces of this Armour: We are furniſhed with the *Girdle of Truth*; ſound Doctrine muſt be held faſt, our Judgments well ſettled againſt errour. Here is the *Breaſt-plate of Righteouſneſs*: Sincere Holineſs muſt be in the Heart; if the Spirit be not right, if the Heart be not clean, there can be no ſafety. Here the *feet are ſhod with the preparation of the Goſpel of Peace*: The Goſpel, that is the Word of Reconciliation with God, and that ſpeaks Peace to the Conſcience, does prepare and fit us to walk in the way of Holineſs; and the difficulties of that way are endured with patience. Here is the *ſhield of Faith*: Believing on Jeſus, reſting on the Promiſes, that in in Him are *Yea* and *Amen*; quenches the Fiery Darts of Satan, ſo that true Converts are not ſunk into an Hell of Deſpair by the remembrance of their paſt Sins, which the Blood of Jeſus has made an atonement for; neither are they diſcouraged by fiery Trials, by the fierceſt Perſecutions. Here is the *Helmet of Salvation*; that is, the *Hope* of Salvation. This Hope is lively, well grounded, will never make aſhamed, and cauſes the Convert to lift up his head with courage, becauſe Redemption and Glory are aproaching. Here is the *Sword of the Spirit*, the Word of God rightly uſed and applyed. And unto theſe pieces of Armour, *Preces & Lacryma arma Eccleſiæ*, Prayers and Tears which are the Churches Weapons, muſt be added, becauſe we need, not onely Armour but skill and ſtrength to uſe it, from above; then we ſhall prevail indeed, when we are *ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. How ſtrong may be the Conſolation, conſidering how compleat and ſtrong the Armour is; how ſtrong the Helper of a Chriſtian! *Eph.* 6. 10. — 18.

5. In this Perfect Word of God, the Convert finds *Promi-*

Promises that may serve to support and encourage him in every condition. Is he afflicted? 'tis in faithfulness, and love; not in wrath and hatred, *Prov.* 3. 12. *Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a Father the Son in whom he delighteth.* And affliction shall be profitable, because it shall be purifying, *Heb.* 12: 10. *He*, that is the Father of Spirits, chastizeth *for our profit, that we may be partakers of his Holiness.* Is the Convert poor and destitute? He may cast *all his care on God, who cares for him*, 1 Pet. 5. 7. *The young Lions slack and suffer hunger; but those that seek the Lord, have him to be their Shepheard*, and *shall not want any good thing*, Psal. 34. 10. Is the Convert tempted? His merciful and faithful High-Priest was tempted before him; and *knowes how to succour him*, Heb. 2. *ult.* When the Apostle was sorely buffeted by Satan, and cries for help; what answer has he? See, be encouraged when you see 2 *Cor.* 12. 9. *And the Lord said unto me, My Grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* Is the Convert deserted, and troubled, because God hides his face? He has the Name of God, and his everlasting Covenant to trust in; and the Face that is now hidden, will be shewn again, and dry up the Tears of the deserted, *Isa.* 54. 7, 8. *For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee: in a little wrath hid I my Face from thee for a Moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.*

6. 'Tis matter of Comfort unto Converts, that this Perfect Word *endures for ever*, 1 Pet. 1. 24, 25. *All Flesh is grass, and all the glory of Man as the Flower of the field; the Grass withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.* The Word is an everlasting truth, never *did* any, never *shall* any find it false. 'Tis a means to Convert the Soul, to make the Heart new, and 'tis written in the new heart in Characters that are indelible, and abiding: 'tis a Sustentation to the New Creature, and cherishes it unto that Life which is Eternal. The *New nature is Immortal*, true Grace *never dies*; but at Death is perfected in *Glory that fadeth not away.*

The CONCLUSION.

THus have I done with *all the Doctrines*; but yet I have not done with *you*. Words of instruction *Solomon* compares to *Nayls*, *Eccles.* 12. 11. I shall add a few strokes more to *drive them home.* How can I with patience see any of you *secure in Sin* still! *fast asleep*! Under *Satans power*, and upon the *bottomless pits brink*! And every

every moment in danger of tumbling down into it! Though some of you *make light* of *Hell*, and *more light* of *Sin* that does deserve it, yet I foresee how you will change your minds, when once you feel what 'tis to be there; and I would fain prevent your going thither. What shall I say? how shall I do to prevail with you, to become willing to a sincere Conversion, and so escape eternal Misery and Confusion? Once more, I cry as *loud* and *earnestly* as I am able, *Turn ye, Turn ye!*

O ye *youngest* that are here, turn to God: Your whole time is short enough to provide for Eternity, begin early to redeem it. Can you be too soon safe and happy? safe in being under the Wing of Christ; happy in having the Lord to be your God and Father. Oh ye Children, become Converts! Christ is ready to embrace you *in his Arms*, and *bless you*. I should not at all fear the Gospels going, if I could behold much of the *Work of Regeneration* among the *young generation*. O ye oldest *Sinners!* Turn to God; the door of Mercy is not quite shut, though you have lived *so long in Sin*, 'till you have *one foot in the Grave*. Admirable Mystery and Miracle of Grace! when those are in a spiritual sense *New Born*, who were old both in Years and Wickedness! Turn ye, O you that have *most Righteousness* of your own! for your *Righteousness is filthy rages*, and you have Sin enough to ruine you. Turn ye, O you that have been guilty of the *greatest Transgressions!* for in the Lord is *superabundant Grace* enough and enough to save you.

If you will not Turn, you *gratifie the evil One*, the Enemy of your Salvation; you Consent to be his *Slaves* and *Prey*; and chuse rather to dwell with him in Torment, than with the Lord in Glory. If you will not turn, you are *Self-haters*; not *Accessaries* only, but *Principals* in the Murthering of your own Souls. It was a true saying of *Salvian*, *Nemo nobis, Crudelior nobis*; none *more* Cruel, none *so* cruel to sinful Man, as *he* is to *himself*: The very Prince of the Devils has not so great an hand in his Destruction.

If you will not turn *immediately*, this very day, hour, moment, it may quickly be too late: Abused Mercy may go away for ever, and God may now at last *forget*, who has *long waited* to be gracious. The *Axe*, before another Sabbath, may be laid to *the root of the Tree* which bears nothing but the *Grapes of Sodom*, and the *Clusters of Gomorrah*: A Sentence may be pronounced from Heaven, *Hew down such a strange and degenerate Plant, and cast it into fire unquenchable.*

But if at last you *see with with your Eyes*, and *hear with your ears*, and *understand with your hearts*, and turn to the Lord; the *Father* will receive you with *open arms of love and kindness*, his tenderest

Bowels

Bowels will be troubled for you, and *sure Mercies* shall be *yours*: The *Lord Jesus* will *see of the travel of his Soul*, to his Satisfaction rejoycing that Children of Regeneration are born into his Church who shall be Heirs of Glory. The *Comforter*, who was *grieved* and *vexed* at your resistance, will be *much pleased* to see you *yield*, and will delight to dwell in you, and to fill you both with Grace and Peace.

Converting Grace whenever wrought on Earth, causes a *New Triumph* above in Glory. The *Thrones*, *Dominions*, the *Cherubim*, the *Seraphim* that are there, will sing a New Song of Praise; they will give *glory to God in the Highest*, when more Sinners are *begotten again to a lively Hope*; they will ascribe Blessing and Honour to *the Lamb*, when more Souls are *redeemed by his Blood*.

Have I been speaking unto *Stocks and Stones*; or unto those who have *Senses*, *Souls*, and *Reason*? If you will not turn that you may be saved, I must confess 'twere well if you had *no Souls* to lose for ever. It was a Custom among the Ancient *Romans*, to keep dead Bodies above ground *several dayes*, and often to *cry in their ears with a loud Voice*, to see if they were *dead indeed*. And these were called *Corpora conclamata*, Bodies that had *been cryed unto* in vain, and then they were carried to their Burial. May not your *Souls*, O unconverted Sinners, be called *Animæ conclamatæ*, Souls that have *been often cryed unto*, to turn and live? But if you still refuse, 'tis a sign you are very dead indeed, and you may quickly be buried in the *fiery Tophet*, out of which you shall never rise more.

But alas! all Pleadings, Intreaties, Arguments, will be to little purpose, unless there come a *convincing Light*, a *converting Power* from above. *Cathedram habet in cœlo qui corda docet in terrâ*: He has his *Chair in Heaven* who teaches *hearts* on Earth. Oh that the *glorious Spirit* would come and *breath upon the dead dry bones*, and inspire a Life that may never end! That he would cause All, even the most hardned and dead in sin, to become Alive to God, and have *their fruit unto holiness, that the end may be everlasting Life*. Let *God arise, and let his enemies be scatter'd!* Let Sin, Satan and Mammon be forced to flee before Him! that all Hearts possest by *them*, may now submit to *Him!* When the *tongues of Men and Angels* cannot prevail, one powerful word from God can convert a multitude of Souls, though they have been *never so disobedient and gainsaying*. If the Lord will fill his *Sanctuary* with his Glory, it will be to all unconverted Ones that are here, the *place* of their *new Birth*, and the very *Gate of Heaven*.

FINIS.

A

WARNING

GIVEN TO

Secure Sinners,

TO

Prepare for *Judgment*,

TO

Flee from *Wrath to Come*,

AND

Turn from *All Sin*;

BUT

Especially the Sin which does *most easily beset them.*

By *NATHANAEL VINCENT*, M. A.
Minister of the Gospel.

Ezek. 33. 7. *O Son of Man, I have set thee a Watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the Word at my Mouth, and warn them from Me.*

LICENSED,

March 17th. 1688.

LONDON, Printed by *J. Astwood* for *Tho. Parkhurst* at the *Bible* and *three Crowns*, at the lower end of *Cheap-side*, near *Mercers-Chappel*. 1688.

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THE Epistle to the READER.

Reader!

When I Preached these following Sermons, I had not the least thought of Publishing them; They were taken from my Mouth by a dexterous and nimble hand that wrote almost every Word I utter'd: I was very much sollicited to Print them; and the Notes being written out fair, and brought to me, I have look'd them over, and now they are presented to thee, with a sincere Design that they may be *beneficial to thee, and not without Hope* they will be so. *The Subjects here handled are* awakening; *and in this* secure Age, *what need is there of* startling Sermons! *At this day in* England, *there is work enough for many a* Boanerges, *for* ten thousand Sons of Thunder.

The guilt and defilement of Sin, proves it to be Mans greatest Enemy; but because it stupifies and hardens those that have been guilty of it, it is likely the more effectually to destroy them; for the Disease *not being* felt, *the* Remedy *is* neglected. *A spiritual Lethargy is the general Distemper, most continue* fast asleep in Sin, *till* Hell wakes them, *but then it is* too late. *Though Christ has the* Key of Hell, *that Saviour* releases none *that once are thrown into it.* Miserable World, because it lies in Wickedness! more *miserable, because it apprehends not how miserable its Wickedness has made it! because it* fears not, *it* endeavours *not to* escape Eternal Misery!

Oh dreadful Day of God *that's coming! when all Apostate Angels that are now* in Chains of Darkness,

shall be brought forth and judged, and dealt with as the Enemies of God and Man: These Principalities and Powers will be overpow'd, and utterly unable to avoid the severity of their Righteous and Almighty Judge: How much evil have they done, and still they are doing more! of what Woe and Torment are they capable!

And all those of the Children of Men who have been led Captive by Satan at his Pleasure, that have resolved rather to be destroyed themselves, than that the works of the Devil should be destroyed in them, 'tis just that they should, but how sad will it be for them, to share in Torment with him? Sin will have a very bad end; all that are gone into another World, are sensible of it, though few in this World perceive it. When the Servants of Sin have received their Wages, which is Death; then they will know to their sorrow, what kind of Master they have served, and what Pains they foolishly took for that Misery, which they should have taken Pains to have prevented.

Reader!

Be wise, believe and fear, and take the Watchman's Warning: The Sword in the Hand of the living Eternal God will give a dreadful and a deadly Blow; to fall under his Vengeance will be fearful, and thy Blood lying upon thy own Head, it will lye very heavy, and upon this will follow everlasting heaviness and anguish. Oh fear the Wrath to come before 'tis come, and fly from Sin, and come to God by Jesus Christ, a Saviour both from Sin and Wrath, and a Saviour to the uttermost. Better Counsel than this cannot be taken by thy self, nor given by any to thee.

Now

ROM. XIV. 10, latter part.

We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Have been lately Discoursing concerning *Conversion*: The Digression I make this day, is subservient to my great Design, which is the Conversion and Salvation of this Assembly: It infinitely concerns you all to turn to God, for quickly you will have a *Summons* to come unto *his Bar*: and how soon that Summons may be given, who can tell? Those that *least think on't*, and least care to be *provided and ready for* it, perhaps may have it soonest; and if the Converts themselves, as the Scripture tells us, are *scarcely saved*; Oh where shall the Unconverted and *the Sinner appear*? I wish that *I may Preach* and *you may Hear* as those who do really believe *we shall all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ*.

The Apostle in these words speaks enough, one would think, to startle the most stupid Conscience, to make the most secure, like *Felix* to tremble; to awaken even those that are dead in Sins and Trespasses. Let me tell you, the Devils themselves are more of them *Atheists and Infi-*

dels, they all believe this Text, and the thoughts of Judgment make *them tremble*; therefore if any Sinner remains fearless and unconcern'd, he does in this respect *outsin* the very *Apostate Angels*.

There are three things observable in the Words.

1. Here is a *Judgment Seat*, the most *glorious* that ever *was*, the *last* that ever will be; from this *Tribunal* there can be *no Appeal* unto any other, the Sentence whether of *Absolution* or *Condemnation* that will here be past'd, will *never be revers'd*, but stand firm unto Eternity.

2. You are told *who* is to be the *Judge*, he is the *Lord Jesus Christ*. We read of a twofold Appearing of Christ, his *first* and his *second* Appearing; He came at first in the *form of a Servant*, he was *to be* made Sin, and he *was made Sin and a Curse* for us: He *gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity*; and if he had given *other and less* than *himself*, it would not have satisfied. The Churches Sins could be done away by no *lower a Priest*, than Christ the *greatest* and *highest* of all; and the Priest was fain *himself* to be, and that a *most voluntary Sacrifice*. He appear'd at first to *put away sin by the Sacrifice of himself*; but when he comes the second time, to Judge the World, he will appear after another kind of manner: From the *beginning* of the World, there hath not been *such a sight* as there *will be* at the *end of it*. The Lord Jesus will come with a *Power* which none can withstand, with *great Glory*, which will fill the Saints with Joy; for they *shall appear in glory with him*, but will be exceedingly amazing and confounding to all those who were the Enemies of his Kingdom.

3. Here

Here are the *Persons* that are to *stand before* this Judge; if you ask, *Who are they?* I Answer by another Question, *Who or where are the Persons that shall be exempted?* All from the *beginning* of the World to the *end* of it, *All* from the *first Man* that was made, unto the *last* of his Posterity that shall be born, must stand before Christ the Lord, that from his Mouth they may receive their final and eternal Doom. There is a great difference between *standing before the Judgment Seat*, and *standing in Judgment*; the *former* implies being *made to appear* at the Tribunal, the *latter* implies being *Acquitted* there. The Psalmist tells us, That *the ungodly shall not stand in the Judgment, nor Sinners in the Congregation of the Righteous*, Psal. 1. 5. yet all of these shall be forced to appear at the Bar of God; there they must stand trembling, expecting the terrible Sentence of Condemnation: And Oh what a *Mideous Outcry* will the *whole multitude* of Wicked and Reprobate Ones make, when without *hope of Mercy* they are adjudged to *endless Misery!*

Doct. The Doctrine I raise from the Words is this, *All shall be Judged by Christ at the great Day*: As certainly as you are all here, so certainly at that day you shall appear at his Judgment Seat; Death is not *more* certain, nay, it is not *so* certain as Judgment. The Apostle tells us that *all shall not Dye*, for some shall be *Changed*, but even these that are changed, though they *escape the Grave*, they shall *stand at the Tribunal*, and *give account of themselves unto God*. This Doctrine concerning Judgment, was Preached early in the

World; we find 'twas Published before the Flood of *Noah*, as you may see, *Jude* v. 14, 15. where you have the summe of a Sermon, but a very terrible one, Preached by *Enoch* the *Seventh from Adam*; *Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard speeches which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him.* Under the *Mosaical* Dispensation, the Children of *Israel* heard the same Doctrine: That great Prince and Preacher *Solomon*, thus concludes his Book of *Ecclesiastes*, having displayed the Creatures *Vanity*, having taught Man his Interest and Duty, *To fear God, and to keep his Commandments*; he closes with these words, *Chap.* 12. ult. *God will bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*: And how plainly does the Apostle *Paul* speak to the same purpose, 2 *Cor.* 5. 10, 11. *For we must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad; knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord, we persuade Men.*

In the handling of this Doctrine, this is the Method I shall observe.

First, I shall Discourse concerning *Him* that is to be the *Judge*.

Secondly, I shall speak concerning the *Persons* that are to be *judged*.

Thirdly, Concerning the *things* that shall be brought into *Judgment*.

Fourthly, I shall demonstrate the *Certainty* of this Judgment.

And

And then in the last Place make *Application*.

In the first Place I am to Discourse concerning the *Judge*, and the Text plainly tells us, that the Judge is *Christ*. The *Father* I grant, is said to judge, 1 Pet. 1. 17. *If ye call on the Father who without respect of persons judgeth according to every mans work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* Yet it is said in another place, *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son*, Joh. 5. 22. How shall these Scriptures be reconciled? The reconciliation is easie, thus; the Father judges, because the *Authority of Judging* belongs to him, because he does *Consent unto the Sons Judgment*, and has ordained him to Judge the World in Righteousness; the truth is, the Father Judges all, but 'tis *mediately* by Jesus Christ: And yet in another sense the *Father judges not*, because Christ the Son, the second Person in the Godhead *alone*, *was incarnate*, and manifested in the Flesh, and He alone will *visibly Judge* the World at the great approaching Day.

These four things may be observed concerning Christ the Judge.

He is a *Saviour to the uttermost*.

He is the *Only Saviour*.

He is *Lord of all*.

And as *such a Lord*, he will come with a *most glorious Attendance*.

1. Christ the Judge is a *Saviour to the uttermost*, and really at the Judgment-day he will *compleat* the Churches *Salvation*; he began it here in this World, and still is carrying it on; but

the

the last day will be the day, in which he will put his *last Hand* to this Work, and make it *perfect*, Heb. 9. 28. *Christ was once offered up to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto Salvation*; then Salvation shall be consummate; the whole of it shall be wrought, nothing of Sin or the sad effects of it shall remain, nothing that shall cause the least frown in the Face of God to eternity: Death will be swallowed up in Victory, the whole Man will be glorious and immortal; Christ will then have compleated his whole Design upon all his Saints and Members, he will have made them as holy and happy as he did intend to make them, he will indeed *present his Church a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but it shall be all holy*, and its Beauty without the least *blemish*, Eph. 5. 27.

2. Christ the Judge is the *Only Saviour*, therefore those that are *Condemn'd* by *Him*, it is in vain for them to expect Salvation from *any other*. Christ is the *only Foundation-stone* on which all that build shall stand; other Builders are foolish, and build upon the *sand*, and what they build will fall, and *great will be the fall of it*. They that are not interested in the Lord Jesus by Faith, that are not Justified by his Blood, who beside can save them from Wrath? those whose Iniquities are not done away by his offering up of himself without spot to God, there can be found no other *Sacrifice for their sins*, but a *certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery indignation that shall devour the Adversaries*: And how dread-

ful

al will it be to be Sentenced to Death and Damnation, by the only Author of Salvation and Life! they that by his Mouth shall be doom'd to eternal Destruction, that Destruction will be made ten thousand times the *forer* by *eternal Desperation*: Alas, what Hope can be left, when the Lamb of God, who alone *can take away Sin*, shall be so full of Wrath, as for ever to reject and cast away the Sinner?

3. Christ the Judge is *Lord of all*; this is a truth that the Tongue of an Angel did Proclaim, *Luk.* 2. 11. a truth that *every Tongue should confess*, Phil. 2. 11. that *every Heart* ought to *believe*, and which the most *unbelieving* and *obstinate* at last shall be *made to know*. Christ hath on his *Vesture, and on his Thigh, this Name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, Rev. 19. 16. He has all Power in his hand, things in Heaven, and Earth, and under the Earth are subject to him: Those that are wise do willingly bow before him, and they who will not bow, he can easily break and dash them to pieces. A mighty Lord Christ is, at whose Command *Death* shall *deliver again all* that for so many years he had *imprisoned* in the *Grave*; he has indeed the Key of Death and Hell too, *Rev.* 1. 18. both are under his Power; at his Command also *the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the Elements shall melt with fervent heat, the Earth also and the works therein shall be burnt up*. There is no dealing with this Judge by way of *resistance*; it concerns us all to be *diligent, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless*, 2 Pet. 3. 10, 14.

4. Christ

4. Christ the Judge will come with a *glorious Attendance*: How awakening to the World will the *Voice of the Arch-Angel and the Trump of God* be! Christ will appear with a light far above the brightness of the Sun, not a Member of his but shall shine like that glorious Luminary, *Mat.* 13. 43. *Then shall the righteous shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father*; And what a spectacle will all the Saints together be, as so many millions of Suns shining at *Once*, and their Lord in the heighth of Glory at the head of them! He will be revealed also with his *mighty Angels*; these excellent Spirits at his Command, *ministred* unto his *Members* on Earth, and they will wait upon the *Head* at the day of his *appearing and his Kingdom*. There is much Work for the Angels to do at the Worlds end; they are compared to *Reapers* that are safely to *gather the Wheat*, and to bind the *Tares in bundles* for the *fire*, *Mat.* 13. 41, 42. *The Son of Man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* The greatest Train of Nobility and Courtiers that attend at the Coronation of the highest Emperour on Earth, are but a *poor shew* to an *innumerable Company of Angels*; for *all in Heaven* will be with Christ at Judgment, to do him honour, who is indeed the *Head of all Principality and Power*. Thus of the *Judge*.

In the second Place I am to speak of the *Persons that are to be judged*: The Text takes in *All*, there-

therefore none shall be exempted, and none in a vain and foolish imagination should exempt themselves? It will be a *general Assize*, at which all the Sons and Daughters of *Adam* shall appear.

1. The *highest and greatest of Men will be brought to Judgment*: Death makes bold with *them* as well as others, and enters the stateliest Palaces, the strongest Forts, as well as the Cottages of the meanest. The Rulers and Conquerors of the World, that *caused Terror in the land of the living*, yet they are made to *bear the shame* of their *Weakness and Mortality*; they are *brought down to the Pit*, their *Swords are laid under their Heads*, their *Hands* being able to *hold them no longer*, *Ezek.* 32. 27. And if Death is not afraid to *seize them*, surely *Christ will not be afraid to Judge them*. This mighty Lord *regards not the persons of Princes, nor the rich more than the poor*; Job 34. 19. *I have said ye are Gods*, speaking to the great Ones of the World, *but ye shall dye like Men*, *Psal.* 82. 7. Princes are *greater* Worms, other Men are *lesser*, but all must call *Corruption Father*; and when they come to stand before Christs Bar, foregoing earthly Dignity will be insignificant, all must stand upon even ground: And truly those great Ones of the World that have abused their Power, and by a bad example drawn many to Sin and to Hell after them, their greatness will but Increase their Account and Misery.

2. As the greatest, so the *Meanest must be brought to Judgment*, though there is never so vast a multitude; God takes notice of them all *now*, and none of them must think to escape in a crowd

then

then: The Apostle speaks plainly of Individuals, *Rom.* 14. 12. *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God:* Those that live most private and retired, are under Gods continual Inspection; they that are of the lowest rank and quality, whom, there are that disdain so much as to look upon, yet God sees them. The Sun shines upon a Mole-hill as well as upon a Mountain, upon a Shrub as well as upon a Cedar, upon a Fly as well as upon an Emperor; and truly the All-seeing Eye of God beholds the *low* as well as the *high*, and there is not any one of them all, but shall be made to render an account of all his doings.

3. Righteous *Ones must stand before Christs Judgment-seat:* All his *Members* must appear before *Him* their *Head*, but shall be dealt with after a *different manner* from others; *Grace and Love* makes a *difference* now, but how highly magnified will the Grace of Christ be in the *difference* it *makes at that Day?* to find *Mercy of the Lord in that day*, which the Apostle Prays *Onesiphorus* might find, 2 *Tim.* 1. 18. when the greatest part of the World shall with a strong hand, the Earth being deaf to all their cryes, be turned into everlasting fire; this is *great Mercy* indeed, great as *the Heaven is high above the Earth.* The Righteous shall appear, but they shall be set at the *Lords right hand*, to shew his peculiar Favour to them, and they shall joyfully own what his Hand has done for them. Christs Appearing will be glorious, and so will be the appearing of his Saints; then 'twill be understood what 'tis to be a Saint, *Col.* 3. 4. *When Christ who is our*

shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in Glory.

A Question is here started by some, *Whether the Sins of the Righteous shall be then made known?* The Scripture plainly tells us, That when the Sins of such *come to be sought for, there shall be none*, and *that they shall not be found*; none of them shall be *imputed* or *laid to their charge*, none shall be *so discover'd* in Judgment, as to *rise up* in Judgment against them, to Condemn them: But since there will such a light shine at that day that will make all things manifest, both good and evil, suppose the Iniquities of the Righteous should be made known to the whole Creation, such will be their Purity, such will be their Blessedness and Joy, that there will not be the *least room for shame or sorrow* at the discovery: But when all the Sins that have been Forgiven and Purged, shall be revealed, others as well as themselves will be filled with *Wonder at the Blood of Jesus*, and the *powerful Grace of God*.

4. As the Righteous, so *the Wicked must stand before Christs Bar*; they would fain not come thither, but there is an irresistible Power to force them. The Malefactor who is Condemned for Murther, Rape, or Treason, would fain decline the Judges View, he is Self-condemn'd, and therefore fears the Judges Sentence; but the Gaoler, the Officers compel him to the Bar, where Judgment is given against him to take away his Life. Wicked Men will be horribly afraid to make their Appearance before the Lord Jesus, whose Salvation they have slighted, whose Kingdom and Government they would by no means

submit

submit unto; they will wish that their *Bodies might sleep eternally* in their Graves, and never have such a *Resurrection* which will be *only to Damnation*; they will wish rather to be turned into *Nothing*, than to be turned into *Hell*; they will *call to the Rocks and the Mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the Face of him that sits upon the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb*, *Rev.* 6. 16. But will they, nill they, they must appear at his Seat, and see him Eye to Eye, though his Eye will be as a flame of Fire to terrifie them: That just Indignation that sparkles from Christs looks, how will it amaze them! *Rev.* 1. 7. *Behold he cometh with Clouds, and every eye shall see him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him, even so Amen*; the thing is certain.

3. They that *never heard Christs Gospel shall be brought to Judgment*: He is to Judge the Church, and the whole World in Righteousness. The State of those that are without the Gospel, is set forth as very sad in Scripture; they are said to be *without Christ, being aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the Covenants of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the World*, Eph. 2. 12. Yet it seems to me an unwarrantable boldness, to pronounce them *all lost*, since for ought we know, God may help some of them to *be faithful in that little* he has given them; but however, be it, or be it not so, their Case is so dangerous, that we should be concerned very much for them at present, and Pray that God would make *known his saving health* among them. The Apostle tells us, what will be

the Rule of Christ's proceedings with the Heathen, that never heard of the glad-tydings of Salvation; they shall be *judged according to the Law and Light of Nature*, Rom. 2. 12. *As many as have sinned without Law, shall also perish without Law, and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law; for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified.*

6. They that have *enjoyed the Gospel, and the means of Grace, shall be brought to Judgment*; and of all persons that are to be judged, *these* have *largest* account to give; and the *most Talents* to answer for. A poor Heathen, he has but one Talent, the dim Light of nature; but thou that enjoyest the Gospel, hast *two*, if not *five* Talents to improve: And where much is given, will not much also be required; you that hear Christ Preached, had need to look to it, that you sincerely obey him now; and that you may stand before him at last; for if you fall in Judgment, you will fall very low. Damnation will be great and extraordinary, where *great Salvation* has been *neglected*, *Heb.* 2. 3. Our Lord Jesus plainly intimates, that there are degrees of Torment in the place of future punishment; there is a blacker Darkness, and a Darkness not quite so dimal: there is a *cooler* and an *hotter* Hell. Who are those that shall be thrown into the hottest Hell of all? Truly those who heard the Gospel, and were called to repent and believe, but would do neither, *Mat.* 11. 21, 22, 23, 24. *Woe unto thee* Chorazin, *woe unto thee* Bethsaida, *for if the mighty works that were done in you, had been done in* Tyre *and* Sidon, *they would have repented long ago in Sack-cloath and Ashes: but I say*

to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre *and* Sidon *in the day of Judgment, than for you. And thou* Capernaum, *that art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be cast down to Hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in* Sodom, *it would have remained to this day. But I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the Land of* Sodom *in the Day of Judgment, than for Thee.*

In the third place, I am to speak of the things which will be brought into Judgment, and that both with respect to the *Righteous*, and with respect to the *Wicked*.

I begin with the Righteous; and concerning these you must know,

1. Their *Sincerity* at the day of Judgment, will be *made apparent*. All the Sincerity that has been on Earth, will then be own'd and approved; every one shall have an *Euge*, a Commendation, that has been *a good and faithful Servant*, Mat. 25. 21, 23. The Apostle prays for the *Philippians*, Ch. 1. 10. that they *might be Sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ*. Sincerity will signifie much in that Day: None will pass for sincere, but those that are so. Not one that has been sincere, but shall be accepted and rewarded. Faithful ones may now possibly be loaded with Reproaches from without; and with Censures from within the Church; but at the great Day, all will be wiped off, 1 *Cor.* 4. 5. *Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord do come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts, and then shall every Man have praise of God.* How many that have been high esteem

esteemed among Men, will be discovered then to have been *unsound at Heart*; and that the *World* and *Self* did *act* and *rule* them; tho their Tongues did speak for *God*, and tho they made a *Splendid Profession*, that they were *his Servants*. And how many that have been hardly thought of by Men, will Christ at that day *confess before his Father and the Angels*? their Censurers at the same time being ashamed and confounded.

2. There will *Cognizance be taken of all the good works of the Righteous*. These will *follow them into another World*, Rev. 14. 13. The Apostle, that he might encourage Believers unto diligence, tells them, *Heb.* 6. 10. *God is not unrighteous to forget your Work and Labour of love, which ye have shewed towards his Name*. Good works are *rewardable*, tho they are not *Meritorious*: there is no proportion between the work and the reward, but the reward infinitely exceeds, for *God himself* is the *reward* of the Saints, and *All in all* that are in Heaven. There is no intrinsick worth in good works to deserve Heaven; but God has promised Heaven and eternal Life, and is Righteous in bestowing it; but still it must be acknowledged his free Gift, and *given through Jesus Christ*. Indeed, *Mat.* 25. 35, 40. *mention* is made only of works of Charity and Mercy. *I was an Hungred, and ye gave me Meat, Thirsty and ye gave me Drink, I was a Stranger, and ye took me in. I was Naked, and ye cloathed me; Sick, and ye visited me. I was in Prison, and ye came to me*. From hence you are to learn how acceptable such works as these are; and you should be stirr'd up to abound in them; but *other works* are *not excluded*; for afterwards our Lord

does only *mention* the *mercilesness*, and *uncharitable Omissions* of the wicked; and yet 'tis plain from other Scriptures, that their *other Sins* will be punished; their not *knowing God*, their *disobedience to the Gospel of Christ*, 2 Thess. 1. 8.

3. The Sentence which will be past upon them, will be a *Sentence of Absolution*: they shall be absolved and acquitted openly before Men and Angels. All their Sins will be forgotten, and buried; there will be an eternal deliverance from the Curse. With what Admiration, Joy and Triumph will they hear, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World!* Mat. 25. 34. What a Kingdom is that, that never shall be moved! What a Crown is that, that is incorruptible! What gladness will fill their Hearts, when the Crown of Life is put upon their Heads! The Sentence being pronounced, presently 'twill be done according to this Sentence; possession will be taken of the glorious Inheritance, they shall *enter into life Eternal*, Mat. 25. 46. Thus of the Righteous.

I am to speak also concerning the Wicked; and as to these, you must understand,

1. All the *works of wicked men will be brought into Judgment*. All their sinful Deeds will follow them to the Bar of God! they will rise with them, and against them at that Day: when a Sinner shall appear, and all his Drunkenness, his Whoredoms, his unjust and cheating Actions, all his evil Deeds of every sort, shall *surround and appear with him*, before the *Holy* and *Righteous Judge*! How will he be amazed at the *sight* of all his Transgressions! How will he tremble to *hear* how *loud they cry*

for

for Vengeance upon him! Not a deed of Darkneſs, but then will be brought to light, to his greater confuſion!

2. Not only the *Works* of the Wicked, but their *very Words ſhall all be accounted for.* The Judge himſelf ſpeaks this very plainly, *Mat.* 12. 36. *But I ſay unto you, that every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account thereof in the day of Judgment.* By *idle* words may be meant words uſeleſs and unprofitable to the Speakers and to the Hearers; or *idle* and *vain*, according to the Hebrew uſe, may ſignifie, *falſe, deceitful, lying.* God does hear all words at preſent, *Pſal.* 139. 4. *There is not a word in my Tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knoweſt it altogether.* And words which very much declare what moſt abounds in the Heart, muſt be anſwered for at laſt. And if unprofitable talk will then be condemned, how ſad will be the Caſe of all obſcene and filthy Speakers! of all egregious Lyars! of all injurious Slanderers and Back-biters! of all Blaſphemers, curſing curſed Swearers! of all whoſe impious Tongues have made bold with the *Blood and Wounds* of God their Judge, and inſtead of ſerious praying, have moſt preſumptuouſly *called upon*, and *dared God* to *Damn them*!

3. As the works and words, ſo *the Thoughts of wicked men* ſhall be brought into Judgment. Thoughts are Sins, and need forgiveneſs; and ought to be repented of. Memorable is that which *Simon Peter* ſays to *Simon Magus*, *Act.* 8. 22. *Repent therefore of this thy wickedneſs, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy Heart may be forgiven thee.* If theſe are not repented of and pardon'd, alas, theſe alſo muſt be charged upon Sinners; vaſtly to the increaſing of

their punishment. How innumerable are the Thousands of thousands, the Millions of Millions of vain and wicked thoughts, desires and lustings that have lodged in the Hearts of the ungodly! The heart searcher sees every one of them; and will make them know at the last day, that he remembers all. Proud and Self-conceited Thoughts, and touring imaginations; impure and lascivious Thoughts, and inward boyling of Concupiscence; insatiable Covetousness, and eager projects for *filthy gain*; the stirrings of Envy, Malice, Anger and Revenge; the Judge will take notice of all; for *he knows what is in Man*, Joh. 2.25. It will be a *large Bill of Inditement*, where Deeds, Words and Thoughts are all written down from first to last, and not so much as one forgotten. The opening of the *Book of Gods remembrance* where all are recorded, will be very amazing.

4. The *Sentence that will be past upon the wicked, will be unconceivably full of horrour*, Mat. 25. 41. *Then shall he say to them on the Left-hand, Depart from me ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* For *Him*, who is the *way to come* to God, to say *Depart*! to depart from *Christ*, the Sinners *only Hope and Saviour*! to depart with a *Curse*! to depart into *Fire*, the Extremity of Torment! to depart into *everlasting Fire*! to be tormented without any intermission or end! to be for ever in such evil and hateful Company, as *Devils and damned Angels*! this is woful beyond all utterance! And this Sentence as soon as pass'd, will be put in Execution. *Now* indeed, such is the patience of God, *Sentence against an evil work is not speedily Executed; and therefore such is their Maligni-*

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ty and Ingratitude, *the Heart of the Sons of men is fully set in them to do Evil*, Eccles. 8. 11. But at the great day, as soon as the wicked are Sentenced, they will be sent, and forced to go away *into everlasting Punishment*, Mat. 25. *ult.* the words κόλασιν αἰώνιον, *everlasting Punishment* or *Torment*, are remarkable; for here it is necessarily imply'd, that the wicked shall certainly *be* to Eternity, that they may be *Punished and Tormented* to Eternity; and they shall be sensible (else it would not be Torment) of the Punishment they undergo. By eternal Destruction, you are not to understand eternal *Annihilation*, or being turned for ever into *Nothing*: for if a wicked Man should altogether *cease to be*, he must needs also *cease to be punished*. For 'tis no more a Punishment to be *nothing to Eternity*, than it can be called a Punishment to have been nothing from Eternity. Wicked men must *be for ever*, and alas they must *bear for ever* the Lord's Vengeance and Indignation. I speak thus terribly, not without bowels of Compassion towards you. I would fain *fright you* by *telling* you of *Wrath*, and the *Vengeance of eternal Fire*, that you may *never*, *never feel it*.

In the Fourth place, I am to demonstrate *the certainty of this Judgment*. If Faith concerning it were but more strong; what an Influence would it have upon the Hearts and Lives of them that do believe it! The Arguments to prove a future Judgment are these.

1. Are there not *fears of this Judgment impress't even upon natural Conscience?* What's the reason, that when Men commit the most secret wickedness, that is very unlikely to be known; there is notwith-

ſtanding a *dread* upon their Spirits? The true reaſon is, Conſcience tells them there is a God, that ſees what Man does not ſee, and that he will judge and puniſh the wickedneſs of which Man takes no notice. This Doctrine of a Judgment to come, of future Rewards and Puniſhments, is written in the Heart of Man by Nature, and he is fain to offer great violence to his own Soul, before he can wear off what is written there; and tho a Sinner become ordinarily very Stupid and Atheiſtical; yet the thoughts and fears of Judgment, will ſometimes, in ſpight of him return upon him. The Apoſtle ſpeaks of *Conſcience bearing witneſs, and Thoughts accuſing and excuſing*; and then preſently *ſpeaks of the Day when God ſhall judge the Secrets of Men by Jeſus Chriſt*, Rom. 2. 15, 16. Conſcience judges at preſent, and hints a future judgment.

2. There is not *ſuch a Diſcrimination made in this World, between the Righteous and the Wicked*, as is ſuitable to the difference that Grace has made between them: Therefore there is a Day coming, when there will be ſuch a Diſcrimination. *Solomon* tells us, that in the courſe of Divine Providence at preſent, *no Man can know either Love or Hatred by all that is before him. All things fall alike to all; there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked, to the good, to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that Sacrificeth, and him that Sacrificeth not; as is the good, ſo is the ſinner; and he that Sweareth, as he that feareth an Oath*, Eccleſ. 9. 1, 2. Nay, often times the worſt of men have in this preſent Life the beſt on't. We read, *Luke* 16. of a wicked Rich Man *receiving his good things*, cloathed in *Purple and fine Linnen*, and faring *Sumptuouſly every day*. A poor Man ready

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to ſtarve for Hunger, was laid at this Rich Man's Gate, his *Body was full of ſores*, and yet this Mans *Soul was ſanctified* with Grace; a *good Man* he was, though *here* he *received evil things*; ſince *thus* it is now, there is a day coming when 'twill be *otherwiſe*. *Job* having ſpoken of the Proſperity of the Wicked in this World, ſtrongly argues that in the next World there will be a *dreadful after-reckoning*, Job. 21. 30. *The Wicked is reſerved to the day of Deſtruction, they ſhall be brought forth to the day of Wrath*: This is the day I am ſpeaking of, a day of the *revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*, Rom. 2. 5. *Who then will render to every man according to his works; to them that by patient continuance in well doing ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil, of the Jew firſt, and alſo of the Gentile*, v. 6, 7, 8, 9.

3. Chriſt hath *Promiſed his Church that he will come again to Judgment*, and hath raiſed her hopes and expectations of his coming, *Rev.* 3. 11. *Behold I come quickly, hold that faſt which thou haſt, that no man take thy Crown*: Heb. 10. 36. *For yet a little while, and he that ſhall come, will come, and will not tarry.* He thus ſpeaks to his Diſciples, *Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe alſo in me*; I am indeed about to leave you, but *I go to prepare a place for you*; and aſſure your ſelves, *I will come again, and receive you to my ſelf, that where I am, there ye may be alſo*, Joh. 14. 1, — 5. Chriſt is the *Amen, the true and faithful Witneſs*, he will certainly be the Judge. The

Church

Church will assuredly see him at last upon the *great White Throne*, and her self safe and triumphant at his right hand. When he comes, how will he be *glorified in his Saints*, and how will he be *admired by all Believers in that Day!* 2 Thes. 1. 10.

4. There are *several things that are hastening Christs coming to Judgment:* The World grows old in Wickedness, and all the Sins of the World have *tongues* to cry for the appearing of a *Judge*, to *pay* their *deserved Wages*; the World grows riper and riper for Vengeance, dryer and dryer for that *Fire* that is to *burn it*. The Church of Christ is also *hastning Christs Appearing*, with their incessant Cryes, *Come Lord Jesus, Come quickly*, *Rev.* 22. 20. *The Spirit and the Bride say, Come*; not only unto *Sinners* to come to Christ, but unto *Christ himself* to appear, that he may put an end both to Sin and Suffering: That's the longing and language of the Spouse, *Cant.* 8. 14. *Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a Roe, or a young Hart upon the mountains of spices;* And this is not the Voice only of the *Church on Earth*, but *they in Heaven* wish for, and intreat the same thing; *How long, Lord, holy and true!* is heard from the *Souls under the Altar*, Rev. 6. 10.

In the last Place I come to the *Application:* I begin with *Inferences* from the *Doctrine*.

1. If there will be a Day of Judgment, hence I inferr, that *there is a present Providence:* Will the Lord judge all at last? surely he *observes* all now. The Lord Jesus would have all the Churches, to know as well, that he *searches the Reins and Heart*, as that he will *render to every*

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man according to his Works, Rev. 2. 23. Whether thy Eye be upon God or no, his Eye is never off from thee; 'tis indeed in *every place, beholding the evil and the good:* What a foolish Creature hast thou reason to call thy self? who *considerest not in thy heart that God remembers all thy Wickedness*, *Hos.* 7. 2. and Gods remembrance at last will *rub up thine*; and what thou now forgettest, will sadly be recalled to thy Mind.

2. Shall all be Judged? hence I inferr *the Love of God to the Righteous, and his hatred of Iniquity:* Not one righteous Man, but shall be acquitted and received by the Judge; not a righteous action, or sincere intention, but shall be rewarded: It will be found at the last day, that a *Widdows Mite* given with a Charitable spirit, and according to the ability, was a great deal in *Gods Treasury*; and that a *Cup of cold Water given to a Disciple, in the Name of a Disciple*, was well taken, and shall not *go unrewarded*, Mat. 10. 42. And there has not been, there is not a Wicked Man on Earth, but his Sin that has been hunting and pursuing to overthrow him, will *then* find him out, *Psal.* 11. 5, 6. because the Lords *Soul hates* the workers of Iniquity; therefore upon *the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their Cup:* By *fire, and brimstone, and tempest*, understand a suddain, grievous, surprizing and intolerable Punishment; and by *snares* understand, that they in Hell shall never be able to extricate themselves out of that Misery into which their Wickedness has brought them.

3. If all shall be Judged, hence I inferr *the*

truth

truth of the Doctrine of the Reſurrection: The *whole Man* has *ſinn'd*, the *whole Man* ſhall *be judg'd* and puniſhed for ſin: Believers are *ſanctified* both in *Soul and Body*, therefore in Body and Soul they ſhall be glorified. The Dead ſhall riſe again, all that are *in the Graves ſhall hear the Voice of* Chriſt, *and ſhall come forth*; *they that have done good to the reſurrection of Life, they that have done evil to the reſurrection of Damnation*, Joh. 5. 28, 29. The Grave is only a Priſon for a time, not a Body that is there that ſhall lye there always; the ſame Body that was employed in the unfruitful works of darkneſs, ſhall be raiſed by the Power of the righteous Judge, to ſhare in the demerited Puniſhment: And the ſame Body of the Saints, the Members of which were uſed as Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs unto Holineſs, by Vertue of its Union with Chriſt, ſhall riſe again, and be *made like unto Chriſts glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to ſubdue all things to himſelf*, Phil. 3. 21. It is not *another Body*: I grant that qualities are alter'd, but the ſubſtance is the ſame, therefore the Apoſtle does not ſtick to ſay τὸ φθαρτὸν, τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο; *This corruptible* ſhall put on *incorruption*, this *mortal* ſhall put on *immortality*; ſo *when this corruptible ſhall have put on incorruption, and this mortal ſhall have put on immortality, then ſhall be brought to paſs the ſaying that is written, Death is ſwallowed up in Victory*, 1 Cor. 15. 53, 54.

4. Will there be a Judgment? 'tis *wonderful there ſhould be ſo much ſecurity in them that hear of it*: Really the very mentioning of Chriſts Tribunal, before which all muſt ſtand, ſhould make all Criminals

minals to tremble. If a Man were ſeized for a Crime that's capital, deſerving Death by the Law of God and Man, and being in Bolts and Fetters in *Newgate*, he ſhould be ſecure and unconcerned, though the Seſſions were at hand, you would conclude him to be very ſtupid and inconſiderate. What, Sinner, ſecure! and ſhortly to be Judged! O Drunkard! Whoremonger! Swearer! Sabbath-breaker! Covetous Worldling! what, ſecure! and ſpeedily to appear at the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, who has ſaid, *That they that do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God! Sin* is *folly*, *ſecurity* in Sin is the *folly of that folly*: Take heed of Security, 'tis not I only, but *Chriſt* himſelf alſo that gives you this neceſſary caution, *Luk.* 21. 34, 35, 36. *And take heed to your ſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and the cares of this life, and ſo that day come upon you unawares; for as a ſnare ſhall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth: Watch ye therefore, and Pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all thoſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of Man.*

USE II. By way of Counſel. Two words of Counſel I would give this Congregation.

The *one* is, more *firmly to believe a Judgment*, and more *frequently to think of it.*

The *other* is, *Be ſure in time to prepare for eternal Judgment.*

1. More *firmly believe*, *more frequently think of Judgment*: You have reaſon to believe it, for the *Judge is ordained*, and though neither Men

nor

nor Angels know the day, yet the *day is appointed*, Act. 17. 30, 31. *The time of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the World in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* The stronger your assent is unto this, the more serious and often will be your Consideration of it.

To think of Judgment is proper for a *Saint*, that he may be encouraged to fight the good fight of Faith, and persevere in well doing to the end.

To think of Judgment is proper for a *Wicked Man*, to awaken him, and to make him *with fear and trembling to work out his Salvation.*

It's proper for an *Hypocrite* to think of Judgment, because then all Masks and Vizours will be pull'd off, all shews will be at an end, and *naked Truth* will appear at that day: The Graves will be open'd, and do ye think the *whited painted Sepulchers* will remain shut? Oh! then all the concealed Pride, and Filthiness, and Selfishness, and Sensuality, and Injustice, and earthliness of Professors, will with all their aggravations be brought to light before Men and Angels: Oh, how many *demure and serious Countenances*, that have been a *covering* to *naughty Hearts*, will then be filled with *Confusion!*

'Tis proper for the *Old* to think of Judgment; they have *one foot* in the Grave already, and quickly the *whole body* must drop into it, and the *Spirit must return to God who gave it.* You also that

are

are *Young* should think of Judgment; have the youngest of you any assurance of your Lives? Infants, Children, Youths, do not many of them dye and step into Eternity? and as you see them leave the World, so certainly they appear before God, and one way or other have their Doom. *Solomon* tells you, that Childhood and Youth are Vanity: Would you that are Young be serious? the Meditation of Judgment would conduce much to it, *Eccles.* 11.9. *Rejoyce, O young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy Youth, and walk in the wayes of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes:* He says, *Rejoyce*, but speaks *Ironically*, and means the *quite contrary*; thou hast no reason at all to rejoyce, whilst taken with things that are seen, and whilst thou walkest in those evil ways which thy Heart naturally does like: Then the Wise man speaks seriously, *But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee to Judgment.*

If you ask me, What are the Benefits that will accrue by a firm Belief, and frequent Meditation of Judgment? I thus Answer to this momentous Question.

1. This will be a *great Preservative against Temptation:* Look beyond the present advantage and delight that Sin boasts of, and see as far as the Judgment-seat, this is the way to silence the Tempter, and to avoid his snare: Would the Lyar dare to speak falsly, if he considered, that *all Lyars* shall be adjudged to *the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death?* Rev. 21. 8. Would the Unclean Person dare to defile himself, and run to the Harlots house, if he did but believe and consider that *Whoremongers*

and

and Adulterers God will judge? Improve Christs Cross, and think of Christs Tribunal, and this will cool and kill Corruptions, and take away the force of your Temptations.

2. The Belief and Meditation of Judgment will cause you *to use this World as not abusing it*, to make a good improvement of it. You that have this World in great abundance, and have the *clearest and largest Estates*; do you think you are *Proprietors* of what you have? Do you think 'tis *given* or only *lent* you for a time? You are only Stewards intrusted with that which is Gods and not yours, and are accountable at the last day for all you have received. What *sad accounts* will most give up of *their Stewardship*; when they must be *no longer Stewards*! *Imprimis*, So much daily for Eating and Drinking to Self, and not to the Glory of God. *Item*, So much for brave Apparel, that Pride might be maintained and gratified. *Item*, So much for making provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof. *Item*, So much for costly and vast Past-times; a great deal of Wealth, and much more precious Time being wasted together. But unto *good uses*, to *maintain a Godly and laborious Ministry* of the Gospel, to the *poor and needy*, given *very little or nothing*. With *what an Eye* do you think that the *Judge* will look upon *such accounts* as these? Think of Judgment, that you may holily improve the unrighteous Mammon, and Christ may say you have been *Faithful Stewards*, even of *worldly things*.

3. The Belief and Meditation of Judgment, will make you *exceeding diligent*, *that you may be found of your Judge in peace, without spot and blameless*. With what Seriousness and Fervency will he come to the Throne

Throne of Grace, that has the Judgment-ſeat alſo in his Eye? How will he hear and practiſe, that remembers he muſt be called to an account, how he has done both? He will take care to be ready whenſoever his Lord calls, and that whenſoever his Lord comes, he may find him doing the Work he ſet him about, and *ſo doing it* as He commands.

2. The other word of Counſel is this, *Be ſure in time to prepare for Eternal Judgment*: Do this ſeriouſly, do it preſently, and as your main buſineſs. That you may prepare indeed,

1. Be *Accuſers and Judges of your ſelves*; take notice of your Sins, with Grief, with Hatred, and holy Indignation! accuſe your ſelves of them before God, with ſelf-loathing and ſelf-abhorrency. Look down by Faith into the loweſt Hell, and ſee the terrible but righteous Severity, that is ſhewn there againſt obſtinate workers of Iniquity; then look up to God, and judge your ſelves in his ſight, acknowledging that you have deſerved one of the hotteſt places in that Lake of Fire. Acknowledge he would be *clear in the* ſoreſt *judgment* he ſhould pronounce upon you, and that He would be *juſtified*, tho you ſhould be *damn'd eternally*, Pſal. 51.4. This *judging of your ſelves*, is the way to prevent *Condemnation with the World*, 1 Cor. 11. 31, 32.

2. If you would be prepared for Judgment, *believe in Jeſus, that you may be juſtified before God at preſent.* Receive Chriſt, who is offer'd in the Goſpel; rely upon his *Obedience and Sufferings for juſtification of life.* And being *juſtified by Faith, you ſhall have Peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, Rom. 5. 1. *Being juſtified by his Blood, you ſhall be Saved from wrath through him*, Rom. 5. 9.

What does *ponere obicem*, put a *Bar* before Hell Gate, and hinder us from falling into that place of Woe? The *Cross* of Christ, that's the Bar; you are to place your Confidence in Christ Crucified: If justified by him now, he will *ratifie the justification* at the last day, and you shall not be condemned then, *Rom.* 8. 33, 34. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of Gods Elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that Condemneth? It is Christ that dyed, yea, rather that is risen again; who is at the Right Hand of God, and maketh Intercession for us.*

3. Would you be prepared for Judgment; *Repent and be converted*; let your minds be changed, and turn to God with your whole Heart. This is the way indeed to stand before him, *Acts* 3. 19. *Repent and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.* The Apostle looks as far as the last day. *Blotting out of Sins*, is Christ's *absolving and acquitting them* from all Trespasses. The time of refreshing, is that great day of *compleat and glorious Redemption*, when all that are Christs shall lift up their Heads with Joy: Repent and be converts in Truth, if you would have that a day of refreshing, and not of confusion. Walk after the Flesh no longer, but after the Spirit; then you need not be afraid of Condemnation, your being guided by his Spirit, will shew you are in Christ, and safe in Him, *Rom.* 8. 1. *There is therefore now no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit; to be carnally minded is Death, but to be Spiritually minded, is life and peace.*

USE III. Of *Terrour* to the *ungodly*, the *Hypocrite*

and the Unbelievers; Christ will judge them all, and they may tremble to think what kind of judgment they shall have: what sharp and piercing words are those, which declare before-hand what will be their Doom, *Mat.* 23. 33. *Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell?* That I may, if it be possible, awaken such, I would lay before them these terrifying considerations.

1. When they appear at Christ's Bar, *all their secret wickedness will be made known.* How many will then be found what they were not in the least suspected! Thy secret wantonness, and Self-pollutions; thy secret injustice and defrauding; thy secret abominations, of all kinds, will then be as *visible to every Eye*, as if written in *Capital Letters* with the *brightest Sun-beam.* And what shame and confusion will cover the wicked Mans Face! they that are impudent, and cannot blush now; how will they be confounded then! The truth is, as the Prophet *Daniel* speaks; *They will rise to shame and everlasting contempt*, Dan. 12. 2.

2. At the day of Judgment it will be *too late, and in vain for the wicked to pray and cry for Mercy*; they will find the Lord eternally removed from the Throne of Grace, and to their Terrour behold him on the Judgment Seat. If the Ungodly roar out, then, *Lord pity! Lord pardon!* Lord, *send us not away into that flaming Furnace that we see before us!* it will be altogether in vain: But 'tis not in vain to cry thus now. *Oh, seek the Lord while he may be found, and call ye upon him whilst he is near*, Isa. 55. 6.

3. It will add to the Terrour of the Wicked, *That the Sentence of Condemnation is pronounced by the Only Saviour*: The *merciful and faithful High Priest*,

that now is so forward to *make Reconciliation for Sin*, that is so ready to give *rest to them that labour, and are heavy laden.* The *Man* Christ Jesus will have no pity at all, no compassion towards the Reprobate *Children of Men*; but deal with them as with the Apostate Angels, *whose Nature he never* took upon him. The only Peace-maker will himself be so incensed, and full of Wrath, as not to be intreated, not to be appeased. The Sentence of Eternal Death, and enduring everlasting Burnings, will be confounding; but 'twill *add* to the *Confusion*, that a *Redeemer* does *pronounce* it.

4. After the Judge has pass'd the Sentence, *Conscience will pronounce it over again*, and will be a *Judge* to the Wicked, *always condemning* them. Conscience will be filled with unspeakable remorse; it will continually be upbraiding them with their madness and folly in *keeping* their *Sins*, and *losing* their *Souls*; and will ever be telling them, that *the Lords ways towards them are equal, but their own ways according to which they are judged, have been unequal*, and full of Iniquity, *Ezek.* 18. 29, 30. The Conscience of Sinners will *side* with their Judge against them. It will tell the most wretched among the Damned, that they cannot *complain of God*, or of the *least injury* he has done them; all that they suffer, they suffer *justly*; and what they suffer, *they* have brought upon *themselves*. The horrible and perpetual *remorse* of Conscience, will prove that the *Worm never dies*, that does torment them.

5. When Sinners come to be condemn'd at the last day, *how many things will rise up in judgment against them?* (pray mind this, and minding trem-

ble,

ble, and trembling turn to God this very instant.) Thousands of *Mercies* will come, and as it were plead thus: *Lord! we have been all abused, we never met with any thing but abuses, and never could lead these men to Repentance!* The Rods of Affliction will have a *Voice* against them too. *Lord! we have stricken these Sinners often, we have made them Bleed and Groan, and smart exceedingly for their Iniquities; but could never make them leave off Sinning against Thee, and against their own Souls!* How many Sermons will rise up in judgment against them; because they either *slept* them away; or if they were awake, they suffer'd them to *slip* out of their *Memories*, and never *applyed* them to their *Hearts!* And as for us, the *Ministers* of the Gospel, our *Testimony* against them will be *true* and *terrible*. *Lord! we lifted up our Voices like Trumpets; we gave them the Watchmans Warning, we told them of the Sword that was coming, and that if they turned not from Sin, it would surely slay them: we wooed them to come to Jesus, that under his Wing they might be secure; but nothing would prevail; their Ears were deaf, their Hearts they hardened, they would not be converted and made clean, they would rush on in Sin still, they would needs Dye, and there was no helping it!* The Condemnation must needs be dreadful, when so many things rise up against them that are condemned!

USE IV. Of *Consolation* to the *Saints*. I must speak to them in another strain. Lift up your Heads, and let your Hearts be filled with Joy; all ye believing, repenting, humble, holy, heavenly-minded Ones! for the Day of your Redemption draws nigh,

with an earnest expectation wait for it, and Triumph at the Thoughts of your great and everlasting *Jubilee*. You will indeed behold the greatest part of mankind turned into Hell; but what Joy will it be to find your selves for ever safe and fully blessed! A dark Shadow sets off a beautiful Picture. The sight of the Rich man in Hell Flames, must needs make *Lazarus* to find a greater sweetness in *Abrahams* Bosome!

Two Grounds of Consolation I shall propound to you, and so conclude.

1. He is to be *your Judge*, that is *your Husband* and *your Head*. The very same whom you now find interceding for you in Prayer; whom you see walking in the midst of the Golden Candlesticks, and blessing his Ordinances to you. The very same whom you have found pitying, and healing your Wounds with his own Blood; succouring you in your Temptations, and telling you that you are the Beloved of his Soul! And since *he* is to Judge you, be comforted. He will behold you with an aspect, that is highly favourable! His *own Spouse*, whom he has ransomed with his *own Life*, Christ will not turn into devouring Fire! He will not take the Members of his own Body, and throw them into everlasting Burnings! Having *Redeemed* them by his *Blood*, having *renewed and Sanctified* them by his *Spirit*; having *raised* them up at the great day; certainly he will receive them to himself, and they shall be *ever with the Lord*, 1 Thes. 4. 17, 18. *wherefore be comforted with these words.*

2. You that are true Believers, whose Faith purifies your Hearts and works by Love; know

that

that there is a Crown designed for you. The *Diadems* that Monarchs have upon their Heads; the *Triple Crown* of Him at *Rome*, is but a *Trifle* to the *Crown of life.* This Crown is purchased, 'tis promised, 'tis prepared; and shortly you shall put it on, and never put it off more. How Splendid, how Bright, how Sparkling, will that Crown be! 'Tis called a Crown of Life, for Death shall be no more. A Crown of Glory, for the Saints shall be more than Conquerours, and Triumphant over all Enemies, and be advanced to the highest Honour and State, whereof they are capable. Finally, 'tis called a Crown of *Righteousness*; 'tis a *Righteous thing with God*, to bestow it through *Christ Jesus*, and perfect Righteousness and Purity will be a great part of the happiness of Saints in Glory. This Crown the Apostle saw to his great encouragement, and he would have all other Believers comforted with the same sight, 2 *Tim.* 4. 7, 8. *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give me at that Day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

Ralph Dells Book 1690

MAT. 11. 23. Form. Part.

And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell!

OUR Lord Jesus is called the *Lamb of God who takes away the Sins of the World*: But in this Lamb there is *Wrath*, and that Wrath is very terrible. Oh the weight of the Mediatours Vengeance! This Wrath is threatned against the impenitent and unbelievers, who refuse to be *Saved from their Sins, resolving to live*, tho they *Dye* in them. The *Light* of the Gospel being neglected, highly aggravates the *Works of Darkness*; makes them more inexcusable, and a greater provocation. None shall fare *worse* at the *Day of Judgment*, than those that have had the longest and the clearest *day of Grace*; but *would not know in that their day*, the things which *belonged to their Peace*. Thou *Capernaum which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell.*

These words which I have read, do speak Christ's sorrow and his displeasure, wherein you may take notice,

1. Of the *Persons* with whom he is displeased, *Thou Capernaum*; the City is put for the Inhabitants of it.

2. Here is the *Reason* of Christs displeasure; they did not understand the great priviledge of *being Exalted unto Heaven*; they did not improve the advantage they had of getting thither.

3. Here

3. Here is a *Punishment* threatned, a sore evil; and that is no less than Hell it self.

4. Here is the *manner* specified of their *going to Hell*; thou shalt be *brought down to Hell*, with a strong Hand, with great Wrath, and in one of the hottest and lowest Places there thou shalt lye for ever.

There are two Doctrines which I raise from the Words.

First, *Those that hear the Gospel, are exalted unto Heaven:* Happy you, if you understand your Priviledge which at this day you enjoy.

Secondly, *They who will not turn to God at the Gospel-call, shall certainly be turned into Hell: Thou Capernaum, who art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell*; and if Christ says it *shall be so*, most certainly it *will be so*. The first of these I shall but just touch upon, for it is the second that I principally purpose to Prosecute.

Doct. 1. The first Doctrine is this; *They that hear the Gospel, are exalted unto Heaven.* The Gospel is an heavenly Calling, *Heb.* 3. 1. it comes from Heaven, and says to those that hear it, *Come up hither.*

1. Life and Immortality is *brought to light by the Gospel*, 2 Tim. 1. 10. Here you have a Map of those happy Regions of Light, and Love, and Joy; where there is nothing present that is burthensome, where there is nothing wanting that is desirable.

2. The Gospel plainly *chalks out the way that leads to Life:* Christ is *the way, the truth, and the life*, Joh. 14. 6. the true way to life indeed: We have

have liberty to *enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus*: had it not been for his undertaking, and performance of what he undertook, there had been a *flaming Sword at Heavens gate*, and no fallen Man could ever have entred there. And as Christ, in whom we are to believe, is the way, so is also *Holiness*: Christ by his Blood has purchased the heavenly Inheritance, and has bought the Saints themselves that are to be the Inheritors; and 'tis by his sanctifying Spirit, by true Holiness, that they are made *meet for that Inheritance*. The *pure in Heart*, and such will be likewise pure in *Life*, are the *blessed Ones* that *shall see God*, Mat. 5. 8. and who besides are desirous or fit to see the Lord?

3. Heaven in the Gospel is *offer'd*; 'tis *seriously*, *freely* offer'd unto *All*; 'tis offer'd to the *meanest Persons*, 'tis offer'd to the *greatest Sinners*, and that without Money, without Price: 'Tis indeed too good, too great a thing for Man to purchase by any thing that he can give or do. Those have very low thoughts of Heaven, and very high thoughts of their own Works, that think they can do enough to merit Heaven. Eternal Life is the *free Gift of God*, not deserved by Man; and 'tis given *through Christ*, Rom. 6. 23. Had not Christ procured it, fallen Men would all have been as certainly excluded as the fallen Angels.

Briefly to Apply this.

1. Be *thankful for the Gospel*, which makes the *richest discovery* that ever was made in this World; the *East*, the *West-Indies* cannot shew any thing comparable to a blessed Immortality; the Jewels

els from the one, the Gold from the other, are contemptible, when Heaven is named. The Gospel tells you where is the true, the *tried Gold*, and of the *Pearl which is of greatest price*; and concerning a *Treasure in Heaven, which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt*, nor can *thieves break through and steal*, Mat. 6. 20.

2. Let the Kingdom of Heaven *suffer Violence*, and do you use an holy *force to take it*; here you will meet with great opposition; Heaven is that which occasions the envy of Hell, because of its real and eternal Excellency, and does very well deserve your labour. Let the *Treasure* in Heaven cause your *Hearts* to be *there*, strive to enter in at the strait gate, hate every false way, because it leads from Heaven, and towards Destruction; let the Hopes of a Crown of glory make you willing to bear the Cross; look upon Sloth as most absurd, when no less than Heaven will be given to them who shew their *diligence in full assurance of hope unto the end*: Press still *forward towards the mark*; you cannot run too fast for such a Prize.

But I shall stay on this no longer: 'Tis the second Doctrine that more largely I shall insist on.

Doct. 2. And that's this, *Those that will not turn to God at the Call of the Gospel, shall certainly be turned into Hell*; 2 Thes. 1. 8, 9. *They that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

In the handling of this Doctrine, I shall,

1. Dis-

1. Diſcourſe concerning Hell, what it is, that you may the *better underſtand it*; and underſtanding be afraid of it.

2. I ſhall *prove the Certainty* of the Doctrine, that Sinners who will not turn to God, ſhall moſt ſurely be turned into Hell.

3. I ſhall Vindicate the Righteouſneſs of God, in thus dealing with, and eternally Puniſhing them that will not turn to him.

4. I ſhall conclude with the *Uſes and Application.*

In the firſt Place I am to Diſcourſe concerning Hell, and to ſhew you *what it is.* In Hell

There is a *Deprivation of good.*

There is an *Infliction of evil, pain and torment.*

There is an *Eternity* of both.

1. In Hell there is a *Deprivation of good:* All the temporal loſſes that have been ſuſtained by all the Children of Men in this World, are not comparable to the *Pœna Damni*, Puniſhment of *loſs*, which one Sinner in Hell ſhall undergoe: Several things thoſe in Hell are deprived of.

1. They are deprived of *all that Love, and Grace, and Mercy that is in God:* The Pſalmiſt that knew by experience the excellency of God's Loving-kindneſs, affirms 'tis *better than Life*, Pſal. 63. 3. His Mercys are *tender*, and a *multitude*, and *ſure* to the Veſſels of Mercy. How were thoſe fill'd with admiration, and with a ſenſe of their obligation, *Who in times paſt were not a People*, but were made *the People of God*; *who had not obtained Mercy*, but after *did obtain Mercy*, 1 Pet. 2. 10. But alas, thó God be *Love* it ſelf, 1 *Joh.* 4. 8. he hath no Love for them that are in Hell, they lye under

der his Wrath and Hatred, and both are unalterably fixt upon them: Though the Lord does delight in ſhewing Mercy, yet his Bowels do not at all ſtir or move towards the Damned; though they lye in extreameſt Woe, and are continually *weeping and wailing*, yet their Tears *draw not* forth his *Compaſſions*: He has *caſt them off for ever*, and will be *favourable no more*; he has *forgotten to be gracious*, and in implacable, but righteous Anger, has *ſhut up his tender Mercies*.

2. They that are in Hell, are deprived *of the beatifical Viſion of God*: The door of Heaven they found ſhut againſt them, when they ſaid, *Lord, Lord, open to us?* and 'twill never be opened: They ſhall never be ſuffered to *ſee him face to face*, but be always excluded from his Preſence. What Happineſs is there in *ſeeing God!* how tranſforming and ſatisfying is this ſight! *Pſal.* 17. ult. *As for me, I ſhall behold thy face in righteouſneſs, I ſhall be ſatisfied when I awake with thy likeneſs*: But the Damned are not, never ſhall be admitted to ſuch a View; they are baniſhed that glorious *Preſence, where there is fulneſs of joy, and where there are pleaſures for evermore*: God has *fixt a great gulph* between himſelf and them, and through that 'tis impoſſible for them *to paſs*, Luk. 16. 26.

3. They in Hell are deprived of *all hopes by a Mediator*: Our Lord tells us, That he *came not into the World to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be ſaved*; and has given a large Commiſſion *to Preach the Goſpel*, to offer that Grace and Salvation whereof he is the Author, *to every Creature*, Mark 16. 15. The Lord Jeſus now encourages all to come to him, that they

they may have rest to their Souls, and life through his Name; and *them that come to him, he will in no wise cast out*, Joh. 6. 37. and when they refuse to come, he expresses great sorrow; he *wept over Jerusalem*, because she *knew not the time of her* gracious *Visitation*. But when Sinners have sinn'd away the day of Grace, and ended all their days on Earth, and by their final Impenitency brought themselves to Hell; then the same Chains are clapt on them, in which the Reprobate Angels ly fetter'd, and Christ will no more save *them* than *these*. Oh dreadful! to lose all hope in Jesus, never to be called to come to him more: Astonishingly fearful! to be in a place where the glad tidings of the Gospel are never heard, where the Spirit never strives, and where the Redeemer never stretches forth an hand to save!

4. They in Hell are deprived *of the glory of the new Jerusalem*: 'Tis a mighty loss, to lose such a *weighty thing* as a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17. Suppose a Rich Man, worth Millions, should break, and not be worth a Farthing; suppose all the Kings and Emperors breathing, should lose their Crowns in one day, this would be but a petty Loss, compared with the loss of a Crown of Life: In Heaven there is such a Crown, and the Damned might have had it, if they had but valued it; but alas! that Crown they must never wear: In Heaven there is a Kingdom, where they in Hell must never reign: When they see what they have lost, and how foolishly, wilfully, and for the sake of what poor things they lost it, how will they be fill'd with Heart-tearing vexation, and be quite overwhelmed with sorrow!

sorrow. *Luk.* 13. 28. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, in the Kingdom of Heaven, and you your selves thrust out.*

2. As in Hell there is a Deprivation of good, so there is an *Infliction of evil, pain and torment.*

1. There is in Hell *great torment in the Conscience:* A wounded Conscience in *this World* has been found intolerable. *Spira*, he signifies that Racks, Gibbets, Flames of Martyrdom, were nothing to what he felt, and in a Pang of Despair attempts Self-murthering; but being hindred, he breaks out into Blasphemy, *I wish I were above God, for I know he will not have Mercy on me:* here was Hells language in his Mouth, and much of Hell-torment in his Heart. *Judas* his Conscience was wounded, could he bear it? No, he becomes his own Executioner, with his own hand ends his Life, and sends his Soul to *his appointed place:* And yet the torment of Conscience in this World, is but the *Praludium*, the beginning of sorrows. Every Conscience in Hell will be *thoroughly awake*, and keep it self *for ever waking*; it will be *exactly sensible*; not a Sin that has been Committed all the life-time, but will have made a Wound in the Conscience; and not a Wound but will be intolerably smarting, without hope of any ease. Conscience will be in a perpetual Agony, in this Agony 'twill rage, and raging it will reproach the Damned: It will tell them of their presumptuous sinning, of their rejecting Christ, their neglecting great Salvation, and how all *its checking* of them was *in vain:* And now 'tis incurably wounded, it can never be quiet, but they shall always find it

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a tormented, a tormenting Fury within them.

2. There is in Hell, not only torment in the Conſcience, but alſo torment in *the Mind and Heart:* What *rueful* thoughts will poſſeſs their Minds! whatever they think of will be torturing; a pleaſing, a delightful thought can never enter into them more: If they *think of Sin*, it will be bitter to conſider how they have been deceived and ruin'd by it: If they think of their *preſent Miſery*, and the remedileſneſs of it, and that themſelves had the greateſt hand in bringing themſelves into it, theſe thoughts like *daggers*, muſt needs pierce their Souls: If they *think of God*, Oh how will they be troubled! how will his *Juſtice*, *Jealouſie*, *Fury*, *Holineſs*, *Truth*, *irreſiſtible Power*, *and Unchangableneſs terrifie them!* Thoughts on Earth were their *Sins*, and Thoughts in Hell will be their *Racks* and *Sorrows*; their Hearts will always be *brim full* of *Grief*. *Shame* and *Confuſion of face* will add to their Miſery, when all their wickedneſs ſhall be known to all, which will make the juſtneſs of their Puniſhment evident. And how will they be tormented with *Anger at the very heart*, and *Indignation againſt themſelves*! becauſe, though the *Devil* was their great Enemy, yet they themſelves were *far greater Enemies* to *themſelves* than *he*.

3. There will in Hell be torment in *Sinners Memories:* I wiſh that none of you that hear me this day, may in that place of Woe, remember the *Warning now given you*, to your *Confuſion*, becauſe you *would not take it*; heark what was ſaid, *Luk.* 16. 25. *Son, remember thou in thy life-time receiveds thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he*

is comforted, and thou art tormented: Really the remembrance of what he *had*, what he *was*, and what he *did* on Earth, was in Hell very tormenting to this wretched Rich Man. The Damned *there*, will remember their delicious Fare, and how ſenſual and bruitiſh they were in pleaſing of their Appetites; they will remember the time they ſpent in Adorning of themſelves, taking much Pains to dreſs and trick the Carkaſs, but no Pains at all to purge the Heart; they will remember their Feaſts, their Mirth, their carnal Jollity, which quite ſtupified their Hearts, and baniſhed all thoughts and care about another World and Eternity; they will remember all the *Mercies* they enjoyed, which they did nothing but abuſe to their *own harm*, as well as to the *diſhonour of that God* who gave them.

Above all, they will remember *what Pains were taken to have prevented their Deſtruction:* The Lord was *unwilling they ſhould Periſh*, but *Death* was that which *themſelves* preferr'd before *Life*. Oh how long did Chriſt come, Sabbath after Sabbath, and *knock at the door*, but they would not open! How often did the Spirit ſtrive with them, to ſtop them in Hells road, and to turn them into the way of Peace, but they were *ſtiff-necked*, and *always reſiſted the Holy Ghoſt*. They will remember their *Preachers* Pains and Prayers, and labour and travel of Soul; how they lifted up their Voices, to awaken them out of their Sin and Security; how they intreated them to be reconciled to God, and to turn into the ſafe and bleſſed Paths of Righteouſneſs; but they were Deaf and obſtinate, nothing would prevail with them, and the remembrance of all this will be *bitter, bitter, bitter* to them.

4. In Hell there will be torment in *the Body and*

the Members of it, and such as no body ever felt, or was capable of bearing here on Earth: The Stone, the Cholick and the Strangury, the greatest Torture that ever the hand of Man inflicted, are no more comparable to the Pains of Hell, than the smallest Prick of a Pin is to a Dagger that strikes quite through, and gives the Heart a deadly Wound. The Senses of the Damned shall have that which will be exceedingly afflicting: What woful Spectacles will their *Eyes* behold! What dismal Noyses will fill their *Ears!* how fierce and unquenchable are the Flames that they shall *feel! all their parts* shall be in pain, not so much as *one* free: The whole Body was defiled, and at Sins service, all the Members were yielded as *instruments of Unrighteousness*; 'tis but righteous that all should be Punished. Why are the *Bodies* of the Wicked *raised* at the last day? surely that they may bear their part in the Condemnation, which the whole Man by Sin has deserved. This Resurrection is certain, but 'tis a dreadful Resurrection, which is a *Resurrection to Damnation*, Joh. 5.29.

In these Torments you may well suppose that *Death* will be wisht for, and that the Damned would *rejoyce if they could find a Grave*; but alas, after the Resurrection, the *first Death* is no more. The Damned in a sad sense do put on Incorruption and Immortality, they can never dye and cease to feel their Pains; they must always live a Life ten thousand times worse than Death, and there is no remedy. O you Wicked Men! where's your *true Love* to your *Bodies*, that you seem to be so tender of? I beseech you mind your *Souls*, and *love your Bodies better*, than by Sin to expose them to the Vengeance of eternal Fire. You see how in Hell there is a *Deprivation of good*, an *Infliction of evil*, *pain and torment*: I add, 3. In

3. In Hell there is *an Eternity of both*, the deprivation will be without *Hope of Reſtitution*; and the Torment will be without *any end*, without the *leaſt Mitigation*. Eternity is an amazing word; the thing it ſelf much more amazing! Who can ſee to the end of Eternity! who can ſee half way into Eternity! *Time* is continually *paſſing*; but Eternity never in the leaſt *ſpends*: 'tis not capable of any *diminution*; after *myriads of Ages*, 'tis ſtill as *bulky* and *whole* as ever. If Hell were Ten thouſand times hotter than it is, yet were it but a *Temporal Puniſhment*, and at laſt to end, 'twould be *Nothing* in compariſon. But ſince thoſe that are thrown into it, muſt lye in it for ever, Hells Eternity is the very Hell of Hell. In Eternity, whether of *Joy* or *Woe*, there is *tota ſimul & perfecta poſſeſſio*, the *whole* of it *perfectly* poſſeſs'd at *once*. Hell is not *parcel'd out* unto the Damned, but they continually feel the *whole of it*. This is terrible; there is not the leaſt part of the puniſhment, that ever they are exempted from undergoing: but 'tis much more terrible, that their Suffering muſt be *always*, and never have a Concluſion.

Divines have ſtretch'd their Wits to repreſent Eternity, that apprehenſions of it might be more ſuitable and affecting, but were never able to reach it. We can no more comprehend Eternity, than a Nut-ſhell can contain the whole Ocean. Suppoſe that all this World were fill'd with *Sand*, from the Earths Centre round, and up to the *higheſt Heaven*; and *once* in a *Thouſand Years*, one *ſingle Sand* ſhould be taken away; How ſad would it be to lye in Torment, till the *whole vaſt heap* were gone! But after ſo many Millions and Millions of Years, for the Damned to be every whit *as far from the End of*

their Misery, as they were the *very first moments* they began to feel it; here *all words fall short*, and I must conclude in *Astonishment!* Do not think that these are *frightful things invented* by *Us* to *feare* you into *better manners*. When we warn and tell you of the Eternity of Hells punishment, we speak the certain Truth of the Eternal God.

In the second place, I am to prove the Doctrine; That *they who will not turn to God, shall most certainly be turned into Hell.* The Arguments to prove this, are these.

1. The first shall be drawn from the *Wrath of God.* This is *revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men*, Rom. 1. 18. They that are called to turn, and yet refuse, that Wrath abides upon them still; unbelief and impenitency bindes, as it were all their Sins fast upon them, and they must needs remain under Wrath also, *Joh. 3. ult. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.* Nay, Wrath instead of being appeased, is increased, by contemning the Gospel-offer of Gods favour and mercy in Christ. And where will unpacified Wrath at length issue? See *Deut. 32. 22. A Fire is kindled in mine Anger, and it shall burn to the lowest Hell.*

2. A second Argument shall be drawn from the *Truth of God.* He has threatned Hell for the punishment of unconverted Sinners, *Psal. 9. 17. The Wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God*: Let there be never so many of them, Hell has room enough to hold them, and their multitude will not be any Security. The Truth of God is engaged to make good *all his promises* to the Faithful, and also *all his threatnings* to the Wicked.

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A man must believe the Promises in order to the accomplishment of them: But tho the Threatnings are dis-believed, they will be fulfilled; and the *greater* the unbelief, the *more certainly* and *surely* will they overtake, and lay hold on the *Unbeliever*.

The Lord is to be credited when he speaks, because he is a God that *cannot Lye*; but when he adds his *Oath* to his word, what he sayes is the *more firmly* to be assented to. His *Covenant of Grace* is confirm'd by an Oath, and when *he could Swear by no greater, he Swore by himself*. And his Oath also confirms his *Threatnings of Wrath*, Heb. 3. 18, 19. *And to whom Swear he that they should not enter into his Rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of Unbelief.*

3. Another Argument to prove, that unconverted Sinners shall be turned into Hell, shall be drawn *from their present Impunity*. Escaping now scot-free, we may conclude the greater certainty of a future reckoning. They that will not turn to God, we see that many of them are in Health, at ease, enjoy peace and plenty, and Sentence against their evil works being not *now* executed, and they hereupon being fully set to do Evil; 'tis reasonable to believe there will be, and 'tis very Righteous there should be a terrible Sentence of Condemnation, and that Sentence put in Execution upon them in the other World.

4. They that will not turn to God at the Gospel call, shall be turned into Hell, for *they slight the only Saviour*. Christ calls himself a *Door*; so he *has been*, from the beginning of the World; so he *will be* to the End of it. There is *no Door* through which *Hell* can be *escaped*, but this. Unconverted Sinners *will not come to Him that they may have Life*, Joh. 5. 40.

therefore they are unavoidably Siezed by eternal Death. *Corruptible things, as Silver and Gold*, they know how to value, but the *precious Blood of Christ* is not prized, and not being Sprinkled with the Blood of Christ *our Passover, who was Sacrificed for us*; the Destroyer has power over them, and they fall into eternal Predition.

In the third place, I am to vindicate the Righteousness of God in thus dealing with, and eternally punishing them that will not turn to Him: And here,

1. Let the *Majesty and greatness of God* be consider'd, *against whom all Sin is committed*. How much greater a Crime is it to strike a Prince upon the Throne, than to strike a Peasant! How much is Sin *greatned*, being committed against the *Highest Majesty of all*, who is infinitely Superiour to all other Powers, *Psal.* 104. 1. *O Lord, my God, thou art very great, thou art Cloathed with Honour and with Majesty!* Psal. 145. *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.* Sin is a Transgression of a Law, enacted by the King of Heaven; and is indeed a disowning of his Soveraign Authority, as if he had no right to rule the Sinner. Think of the *infinite distance* between the *God* who is *offended*, and *Man* that is the *Offender*, and how *much* Sin *offends*; for it disowns his *Government*, and strikes at his very *Being*; for the Sinner *wishes* there were *no God* to be subject to. I say, think of all this, and you will perceive that Sin deserves everlasting Punishment. The carnal Mind thinks Hell *too much* for a Sinner to feel, because it *measures God* by it *self*, and thinks *too little* of the glorious *Jehovah*.

2. Sinners

2. Sinners can *never by all that they ſuffer themſelves, ſatisfie for their Iniquities*; therefore their puniſhment in Hell is juſtly endleſs: No *meer Creature* can make ſatisfaction for Sin. If Chriſt the Mediatour, had not been over all *God bleſſed for ever*, by his Death and all his Sufferings, he would never have *made Peace*. His *God-head* put a *real* and *infinite value* upon the *price* he *paid*, and made it *ſufficient* for our Redemption. The Damned in Hell cannot ſatisfie the Juſtice of God for their Tranſgreſſions; therefore they juſtly are kept eternal Priſoners there. It is above *five Thouſand Years ago*, that the *Evil Angels* were caſt down to Hell; by the puniſhment they have undergone, have *they made any Satisfaction* for their offences? No, no, ſtill they have continued in their Enmity, and deſerved more puniſhment. And from Satans utter alienation from God and all goodneſs, we may infer, that Hell is not a place to mend any; but Sin is hight'ned; thoſe that were bad on Earth, become worſe in Hell, and are unalterably confirm'd in Evil.

3. The puniſhment of Sin in Hell is juſtly Eternal, becauſe Sin is *inſatiable*. Suppoſe a Sinner could live in this World to Eternity, there is corruption enough in his Nature, to make him an *Offender of God unto Eternity*. If he were an *everlaſting Liver* upon Earth, he would be an everlaſting Tranſgreſſour. If the Carnal Heart would but ſpeak out, that would be its Language: *I would deſire no other, no greater happineſs, than that I might live here for ever, that I might Sin here for ever.* This inſatiable Nature of Sin, this inclination and deſire of the Sinner, is known to the Heart-ſearcher; therefore the puniſhment he inflicts is very Righteous, tho 'tis everlaſting.

4. For the Vindication of the Righteousness of God, take notice *what has been offered unto Sinners, and rejected. Christ* is offered; his justifying *Righteousness*, his *unsearchable Riches*; all *his Fulness*; all the Benefits which he has purchased at so dear a Price, and yet the offer is made light of. How much is contemn'd, when Christ is Contemn'd! and how much of Sin is there in the Contempt! The blessed God in the Glorious Gospel, does call to Sinners to turn to him; and what does he offer? His own all-sufficient-self. *I my self am yours, if you will turn to me, and become sincerely mine. I will be a God to you, all my attributes shall be for you: I will be your Shield, and your exceeding great Reward, and your Portion for ever!* Now for a Sinner to turn a Deaf Ear to all this, is such a Sin, as does deserve the *Eternal loss* of what is offer'd; and the feeling of everlasting Wrath is just, since such infinite and everlasting Goodness has been despised. I might also add, that the Sinner is *told of this Eternal Punishment before-hand*; therefore if his Lusts are so dear, that he will venture to be Damned, rather than part with them, when those Lusts that War against his Soul have quite undone him, and brought him down to Hell indeed, he cannot charge God with Injustice; but he must blame himself, because when warned of Hell and Wrath, he would not fear and Flee from it.

I come now to the *Application*. I begin with some Inferences, that may be drawn from the Doctrine.

1. If Sinners that will not turn, shall be brought down to Hell; certainly *Sin is another kind of thing than is commonly imagined*. Oh Sin! how much art thou mistaken!

mistaken! Thou art very little understood on Earth! In Heaven thou art better understood by Saints, and full glad they are they are quite rid of thee! In Hell thou art better understood by Sinners, and they must Groan for ever under the weight of thee! O all of you, Study Hell more, if you would know Sin more fully. Gods severity towards Man for Sin, argues it a very vast Evil. I am perswaded, that all the Men upon Earth, that *all the Saints and Angels in Heaven*, since they cannot *comprehend* the *greatness and goodness of God*, neither can they comprehend *all the Evil* that is in Sin: And if God alone does *fully understand how Evil Sin is*, he alone is the *competent Judge* what *Punishment is due to it*. O *exceeding sinful Sin!* Rom. 7. 13. thou canst not be called by so bad a Name, as thy own is!

2. Learn from hence the *Misery of unconverted Sinners*. Are there none unconverted here? I wish there were not. Are there not many unconverted in this place? I fear there are. Seriously consider in what State you are. You walk upon the *Brink of Hell*; you *Eat* and *Drink* upon the *Brink of Hell*; in your *Shops*, at the *Exchange*, you are still upon the *Brink of Hell*; when you lye down at Night, you *Sleep* upon the *Brink of Hell*. Oh *what Hearts* are yours, that you can *Sleep securely*! Is such a perilous State to be rested in? In such danger, and *depths of Misery*, how should you cry to the Lord for mercy, *Psal.* 130. 1. *Davids* words are proper for a Sinner to make use of, *Psal.* 51. 1. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to thy loving kindness, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my Transgressions.*

3. Hence I infer, That they who refuse to turn to God, are *certainly besides themselves*, else the broken Cisterns would not draw them away from the Fountain

tain of living Waters; and a little gain and pleasure, would not make them venture to lye in Flames unquenchable. God sayes, Turn ye, turn ye! Will you turn, or will ye not? If you will, you shall live; if you won't, where are your Wits? You are out of them in the worst Sense of all. The Lord now sayes, *Turn*, if ye will not hear and obey, at last he will say *Depart*, and that word you *must obey*, and be forced away from him into everlasting Burnings.

4. Shall Sinners be turned into Hell; then their *Prosperity is not to be envied or admired.* It has been a Custom in some places, to grant to condemn'd Malefactors, a Liberty to enjoy their Pleasures and Delights a few days before their Execution; but alas, what did these signifie to them that were to dye a few days after? A *fit Representation* of the condition of the Wicked! They are perhaps gaudily Cloathed, and daintily Fed, and have *more than Heart could wish:* But this prosperity is very short; they stand in *slippery Places*, and quickly fall; *they are brought to Destruction as in a moment, and utterly consumed with Terrours*, Psal. 73. 18, 19. The ungodly do very much *need* our *pity*; but nothing that they have is *worth* our *Envy.*

5. Hence I inferr the *happiness of sincere Converts.* Many temporal Evils may be their exercise at present; but Hells eternal Torments they shall never feel, *Rom.* 8. 1. *There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* Whatever the *Times* are; *in Eternity*, and *to Eternity*, it will be well with them. If Hell were Ransack't all over, you might find Professours, Preachers, Princes, Nobles there; you might find worldly Wise, and worldly wealthy a greatmany, but not

not *one true Convert* among the *whole Number*. Converts are reconciled to God by the Blood of Christ, and are safe and happy. Hell is a dreadful place, and has a very wide *Door*; but who has the *Key of it*? The Key is not in *Satans*, but in *Christ*'s keeping, *Rev.* 1. 18. *I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore*, Amen, *and have the Keys of Hell and of Death.* He will open the Door of Death, that Converts Bodies may come out of the Grave; he will keep the door of Hell fast shut, that Converts shall never be thrown in thither.

USE II. Of Exhortation. That you would all *consider more seriously*, and *believe more heartily* this Doctrine of *Hell*. Often think of the *loss* sustained, and of the *Torment* felt there. It was the Advice of *Chrysostom*, Μὴ φύγωμεν τὴν τῆς κολάσεως μνήμην, ἵνα μὴ κολασθῶμεν: *Let us not fly the remembrance of Hell Torment, that we may never be Tormented there.* The believing consideration of Hells punishment, will have many good Effects.

1. Hereby the *deceitfulness of Sin* will be discovered. The deceitfulness of Sin *hardens you*, *Heb.* 3. 13. *Exhort one another daily, while 'tis called to day, lest any of you be hardned through the deceitfulness of Sin.* Sin pretends to consult your ease, your safety, your satisfaction, your gain, your pleasure: Think seriously of *Hell*, and all these will be found vain pretences. Oh how *very false* a thing is Sin! *First* you must *prove Hell desirable*, before you can *prove* that *Sin* is worthy to be *loved* and *served.*

2. The Remembrance of Hell, will be a *great Preservative against the Tempter.* Evil Angels are great Enemies to the good Word of God; especially they are displeased at Sermons concerning *Christ* and *Hell*; they

they are unwilling that Men ſhould know the *Deſtruction* Sin has brought them in danger of; unwilling they ſhould hear of a *Saviour and Deliverer*. Think of *Hell* whenever you find the *Devil* tempting. He endeavours to hide *Hell* from your Eyes, that he may lead you ſecure thither. Satan tells the *Intemperate* Man, that makes himſelf a Beaſt by exceſſive Drinking; that this is the way to Exhilerate and chear his Spirits, a Remedy againſt care and ſorrow, and a means to make him merry. But he would not have the Drunkard think of *Hell*, nor of *the dreadful Cup of* Gods *indignation without mixture*, that will be put into his hand at the laſt day. Satan tells the defrauding, over-reaching *Knave*, that he will be a great *Gainer* by his Subtlety; but he *hides Hell* from him, where none of his *Gain remains*, and where *eternal happineſs*, and an *immortal Soul* are *loſt for ever*. Satan tells the *filthy Wretch*, of the pleaſures to be found in the embraces of the well-favoured Harlot; but this he conceals; that going *to her Houſe*, his *Feet go down to Death*, and *his Steps will* ſoon *take hold on Hell*. It would be Wiſdom in you, and in all, to ſee how *Sin and Hell are joyned together*. It would make the Tempter loſe his labour; if you would ever remember, that in *Tempting* you to Sin, he does in effect only *perſwade* to be *willing for ever to be deſtroyed*.

3. The ſerious conſideration of *Hell*, will *quicken you to cry for Mercy*. Upon the *Sight* of *Hells miſery*, how deſirable will *Mercy* be in your Eyes! You will pray for this with all *Prayer*. God will find you in the *Congregation*, in the *Family*, and in the *Cloſet*, making your fervent Supplications; and Mercy will be your great Suit. God *delights in ſhewing Mercy*, Mic. 7. 18. The thoughts of Hell will make

make you see how *much you need it*, and such fail not to obtain it.

4. The Remembrance of Hell will *contribute much to your stedfastness in Religion*; 'twill *fortifie and arm you against the fear of Man*: how little is it that the *greatest Man*, that the *most of Men* can do to you? to *fall into the hands of mortal Men*, that can but *kill the body*, is *no great matter*; but to *fall into the hands of the living God*, *is fearful*, Heb. 10. 31. Hark what our Lord says, *Luk.* 12. 4, 5. *I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; fear him who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him:* Yes, he is indeed worthy to be feared! It was a saying of one, *Omnia supplicia, graviorum supplicionum vincuntur formidine*; all Punishments are overcome by the fear of greater Punishments. When thou art called forth to bear Testimony to Christ and to his Truth, before a sinful and an adulterous generation; though thou seest Wracks and Wheels, though thou seest Flames and Furnaces of scalding Lead, be not affrighted at the matter; the *Grace and Comfort* of the *Spirit of Christ* shall be *sufficient* to *carry* thee *through these Pains*; and these are *nothing*, compared with the *Vengeance of eternal fire*, which will be inflicted upon those that *draw back unto perdition.*

USE III. Of *Direction*: How this *whole Congregation may escape the Damnation of Hell.* I hope every *Eye* is *broad awake*; and should not every *Ear be open*, and every *Heart exceedingly attentive*, when Directions concerning *this* are given? The Directions are these:

1. If you would escape Hell, *think of Hell*, the

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effect of Sin, so long, 'till you utterly fall out with Sin the Cause: Sin is the only way that leads to Hell, shun that way and you are safe: Depart from evil, and though possibly you may become a Prey in this World, ye Satan shall not make a Prey of you. If *Sin had never entred into the World*, none in the World would have been turned into Hell; if neither Men nor Angels had sinn'd against God, there would have been no such thing as Hell in being. Oh! View the *Flames* that are so *furious*, and that will *last for ever*, and then consider *Sin* was that which *kindled them*, and the *demerit* of Sin is so *infinitely great*, that it hinders them from being *ever quenched:* Does thy Pride expose thee to Damnation? never be Proud more: Will thy Earthly-mindedness bring thee to Hell? Oh cease thy *loving the World, and the things that are in the World!* 1 Joh. 2. 15. Will any Sin that rules in thee, and that thou art willingly subject to, *reign unto Death*, and ruine thee for ever? Oh be *unwilling* that *any Sin* should reign any longer; and if Sin be out *of thy Will*, 'tis out *of the Throne:* Cry with *David*, Psal. 119. 133. *Order my steps in thy Word, and let no Iniquity have the dominion over me.* Weary you must be of *Sins dominion*, as well as fear *Hells Damnation:* You must not think to go to Heaven, and carry your beloved Lusts along with you thither; if you are resolved to hold fast these, you and they will go to Hell together.

2. If you would escape Hell, take notice how *the door of Hope is open to the very worst of you:* Those that are gone far in Hells road, and are within a step of the burning Lake, tis possible for *them* to be catched as *firebrands out of the burning.* The door is open to day, I advise you to enter presently; I cannot *assure you* 'twill *stand open* 'till to morrow; *While*

it

to day, harden not your hearts, Heb. 3. 8. Though you are *fallen by your Iniquities*, yet if you will *Now* return to the Lord, there is hope for the very worſt of you; paſt Sins ſhall all be buried, if there be a preſent Converſion. *Redemption is plenteous*, and that ſhould abundantly encourage all to Hope and Turn, *Pſal.* 130. 7, 8. *Let Iſrael hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption, and he ſhall redeem Iſrael from all his iniquities.*

3. If you would eſcape Hell, *you muſt be ſure to look unto Jeſus:* Lord Jeſus! *Turn every Eye to thee, and cauſe every Heart to open and receive thee!* Thoſe that were *ſtung* with the *fiery* Serpents, liv'd notwithſtanding, if they *look unto the brazen Serpent:* Thoſe that are in danger of Hell, and have very well deſerved it, ſhall be delivered from it, if by Faith they look to Chriſt, *Iſa.* 45. 22. *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved, all ye ends of the Earth:* Look unto him for *Pardon*, look unto him for *Converting, Cleanſing and Renewing Grace*; look unto him to be the *Author* of true Faith in you, and having been the Author, to be the *Finiſher of your Faith* alſo, *Heb.* 12. 2. Chriſt was *forſaken*, that you might *graciouſly be received* by the Lord: *He* was *Condemn'd to dye*, and *ſuffer'd Death* upon the Croſs, that you might be deliver'd *from eternal Death and Condemnation*; that this was his deſign is plain, *Joh.* 3. 16. *God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him*, ſhould eſcape Hell, and be brought ſafe to Heaven; *ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

HEB.

HEB. 12. Part of *v.* 1.

— And the Sin that does so easily beset us.

IN the foregoing Chapter, the Apostle discourses concerning *Faith*, which is the *substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen:* He declares at large the wonderful and glorious effects that this Faith produced in the Saints under the Old Testament: By Faith these Believers denyed themselves; by Faith they Conquered the whole World, not fearing its fiercest Persecutions; despising all its Wealth, all its Pleasures, all its Glory, *and confessed they were strangers and sojourners on the Earth:* By Faith they *saw Him that is invisible*, and looked *for a City that that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

Now in this Verse where my Text lies, the Apostle applyes unto those believing *Hebrews* to whom he writes, what he had spoken concerning their *faithful Fore-fathers:* These are called a *Cloud of Witnesses:* Witnesses they were, concerning what? truly concerning the *Vanity* of all things that are seen, that are but *temporal:* Witnesses concerning the *excellency* of those things that are not seen, which are *eternal.* They are styled a *Cloud*, because of the *greatness of their Number*; and perhaps there may be some allusion to the *Cloud* in the *Wilderness*, that *guided Israel* into *Canaan:* For though our *Lord Jesus* was *typified* by *that Cloud*, and he is the *inerring Pattern and Example* whom we are bound to follow; yet in Scripture we are advised also to follow *the foot-steps of the Flock*; and in this very Epistle, to be *followers of them who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises.*

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The Course of a Christian in this World is compared to a *Race*; this Race must be *run*, that the Prize at the end of it may be obtained; and that we may run it the better, we are *removere prohibens*, to remove Impediments, to lay aside *every Weight*, and the *Sin that does so easily beset us*.

In the Words I have read, there are three things observable.

1. Here is an *Intimation* of a *Danger*, and that is from *Sin*: Sin and Danger are inseparable; how can it chuse but be prejudicial to him that's guilty of it! you may as well imagine *Hell* to be without *Pain*, as *Sin* to be without *Peril*.

2. The greatest danger is from the Sin that does most easily beset us; 'tis called by the Holy Ghost, εὐπερίστατος ἁμαρτία, the Sin that hangs fastest about us: Some by this understand *Original Sin*, the depravation and Corruption of Nature; some understand the carnal and ensnaring *Fear of Man*: The Apostle arms the *Hebrew* Saints against this, and would have them couragious, and if called to it, *resist even to blood, striving against sin*. But by the Sin that does most easily beset us, we may understand any sin that does so: Yet when we take notice of the *Master-sin*, which is most apt to prevail, we should by all means *trace it* to its *Original*, and take notice of the corrupt Fountain from which this strong and filthy Stream proceeds.

3. Here is the way how to be *secured from Danger*, by laying aside *every weight*, and especially the greatest and the *heaviest Clogg of all*, the Sin that does most easily beset us. Cast away *every transgression*, *so iniquity shall not be your ruine*; but especially that which naturally you *love best* and *more than all*, because *this, this*, is most of all pernicious and destructive.

Doct. The Doctrine which I raiſe from the words is this. *Though all ſin is to be caſt away, the Maſter-ſin eſpecially is to be abandoned.*

In the handling of this Doctrine I ſhall,

1. Prove that *all Sin* is to be caſt away.
2. I ſhall ſhew you how the *Maſter ſin* may be *known*.
3. Produce the Reaſons, why *this* in a *ſpecial* manis to be *forſaken*.

And then in the laſt place make *Application*.

In the firſt place I am to prove that *every ſin* ſhould be caſt away; and the Argument to convince you of this, is in the Verſe where my Text lies. Every Sin is a *weight*, and a moſt unreaſonable thing it is, that Men ſhould be fond of that which is burthenſome and grievous. The weightineſs of Sin, I ſhall demonſtrate in theſe particulars.

1. Sin is a weight to *a ſoftned and ſenſible ſoul*; though a ſtupid Tranſgreſſor feels Sin no more than a ſtone does a Mountain, that lies upon it; yet when once the Heart of Stone is turned into a Heart of Fleſh, Sin preſently becomes very burthenſome. He that has a *new Heart and a new Spirit* given him, will have *new* and *other* apprehenſions of Sin, he will look upon Sin with ſorrow, and himſelf with ſelf-abhorrency, *Ezek.* 36. 26, 31. *A new Heart will I give you, a new Spirit will I put within you. Then ſhall ye remember your evil wayes and your doings that have not been good, and ſhall loath your ſelves in your own ſight for your iniquities and your abominations. David* could not make light of ſin, when once convinced of its evil by the Spirit; he grieves becauſe he had offended God; he fears his wrath that he had deſerved; and earneſtly implores compaſſion and favour. His Sin lay very hard upon him, *Pſal.* 38. 4, 6. *Mine iniquities are gone over my head,*

as

as an heavy burthen, they are too heavy for me; I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long.

2. Sin is a weight unto *the damned in Hell:* that 'tis so, I know; but *how* weighty, I cannot express, no mind on Earth is able to conceive. Sin is the weight which has sunk all the Souls that are there into that place of Wo; and because sin will ly upon them for ever, they shall never be able to rise up under it. In Hell there is a full, a general, an everlasting Conviction, that *sin is heavy.* If we could discourse with the *rich* Man, who as the Gospel tells us is in Hell, and *ask him*, whether his Gluttony, Pride, contempt of God, hatred of Holiness, are *light* or *weighty?* Oh! *what* would that *Tongue* that cryed out for a *drop of Water*, answer to such a question? Surely none in Hell can make light of sin which brought them thither.

3. Sin is a weight which *burthens the whole Creation.* Hard-hearted *Man groans not* under it, when the *whole Creation besides* does. The *Creatures were made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope*, Rom. 8. 20. and *v.* 22. *We know that the whole Creation groaneth and travelleth in pain together even until now.* And all these travelling pains, they are the effects of Sin. *Solomon* in the Book of *Ecclesiastes*, uses several very significant expressions: *Vanity of Vanities, all is vanity*; and *all things are full of labour; Man cannot utter it.* And again, there *are many things that increase vanity.* When Sin entred into the World it made a *sad alteration* in it, well may the Creatures groan under it; and though their pains are terrible, *pains of travel*; yet because *such pains*, they are *hopeful*, and will issue in a *restauration*, which will certainly be, for God has said it. He has told us thus much, that the *Creature shall be delivered from the Bondage of*

Corruption, into the glorious liberty of the Children of God, Rom. 8. 21. But the manner of this Reſtauration, he has not told us: Gods *ſilence* ſhould repreſs *inquiſitive Curioſity*.

4. Sin was found a Weight *by Jeſus the Mediator*. He undertook (and 'twas well for us he did) to bear this Burthen, and *no Shoulders* but his could have born it; but when he bore it, how did he groan under it! This put him into an *Agony*, this made him *Sweat*, and Sweat *drops of Blood*. This made him cry out, *my Soul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto Death: And, My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* Oh! bleſſed Saviour, *what extorted ſuch cryes as theſe from Thee?* Oh! Sinner, *It was thy Sin, and the Sins of all others whom I ſave, that lay ſo hard upon Me*, Iſa. 53. 6. *All we like Sheep*, ſayes the Prophet, *have gone aſtray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the Iniquity of us all.* If the Man Chriſt Jeſus had not been the Eternal Son of God, he could never have born ſuch an heavy Load, as all the Sins of his whole Church laid upon him at once all together.

5. God *himſelf complains of Sin as a weighty thing*, which *He* is very *weary of*, Iſa. 43. 24. *Thou haſt made me to ſerve with thy Sins, and haſt wearied me with thine Iniquities.* And, Amos 2. 13. *Behold I am preſſed under you, as a Cart is preſſed that is full of Sheaves.* Sin is a Burthen to the Almighty, tho he be ſo rich and abundant in Forbearance and Long-ſuffering. Nay, Sin will make *Duties* to be a Burthen to Him, *Iſa.* 1. 13, 14. *Bring no more vain Oblations, your Sabbaths and calling of Aſſemblies, I cannot away with, it is Iniquity even the Solemn Meeting. Your new Moons, and your appointed Feaſts, my Soul hateth; they are a Trouble to me, I am weary to bear them.* And 'tis obſervable, when the Lord comes to a Reſolu-

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tion to *punish* Sinners, because of their Transgressions, He speaks as One about to *ease himself* of a *Load*, Isa. 1. 24. *Therefore thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel: Ah! I will ease me of my Adversaries, and avenge me of my Enemies.* If Sin be thus a Weight, I advise all to be weary, and beg to be eased of it. He is a senseless Fool indeed, who makes a Mock of Sin, and still goes on to add unto his own Burthen.

In the second place. I shall shew you *how the Master Sin may be known:* And here I would premise these three things:

1. All Sin that is *allowed of*, may truly be said *to Reign*, where 'tis allowed. A Man that wilfully continues in the Commission of any Sin, is certainly the Servant of it, whatever it be. 'Tis the Misery of the unregenerate, that they have, *tot Dominos quot vitia*, so many *Lusts*, so many *Lords*.

2. There is in many Persons a *particular* Sin, *which does prevail more than any other.* In the Natural Body there are all the Humours, yet *One* commonly is *Predominant*, and the Denomination is from *that*. Thus 'tis in the Body of Sin; tho there is a Mass of all Corruption; yet there may be some special Corruption, that has the greatest strength and prevalency. This in Scripture is called, the *sweet* Sin, in which the greatest delight is taken, compared to a *sweet Morsel* under the Tongue, *Job* 20. 12, 13. *Tho wickedness is sweet in his Mouth, tho he hide it under his Tongue, tho he spare it and forsake it not*; yet at last it proves extremely bitter, deadly as the *very Gall of Asps within him.*

3. There are some in whom *several Sins are so Predominant*, that 'tis hard to determine which is

most Master. Some have so *hot* an *Anger*, and so *hot* and *furious* a *Lust*, that you cannot so easily judge, which of these is hottest. Nay, in some, Sins that seem very *contrary* one to another, yet in several respects they will both prevail. Many a Man is liberal and *profuse*, as to his *Ornaments* and *Cloathing*; he spends freely in the Sumptuous furnishing of his Table; Hand and Purse are open, if he be in *Riotous Company*. Yet if you ask this Man but for a *little*, to a *good use*: Tell him that the *Members of Christ* are many of them very *needy*; and that he who *gives to the Poor*, *lends unto the Lord*; here he is strangely *Covetous* and *close Fisted*. These things premised, I shall *discover* the *Master Sin*.

1. That is a Master Sin, unto which the *Constitution does most strongly incline*. They that are of a *Sanguine* Complexion, are inclined to Lasciviousness, Voluptuousness, and an airy frothiness of Spirit, which is a great hinderance unto serious Impressions. In the *Choleric* Passion and Anger are apt to prevail, and to hurry them to revengeful words and Actions; not considering what injury they do to others, and how much more to themselves. The *Melancholick* are prone to Envy, Malice, Discontent: The *Flegmatick* unto Stupidity, Carelessness and Sloth. Now Satan takes notice of the Complexion, sails with the Stream of it, and suits his Bait to it; and hereby has very great advantage. Tho *no sin* has the *Dominion* in Believers; for they *are not under the Law, but under Grace*, Rom. 6. 14. yet the Complexion Sin is apt sometimes to *master* even them also; therefore they had need to be watchful against it, and to take great care and pains to mortify it. The Apostle *Paul* observes his own Constitution, and makes conscience of keeping under his Body that

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his Temperament might not be his Temptation; 1 *Cor.* 9. *ult. I keep under my Body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have Preached unto others, I my self should be a cast-away.*

2. That is a Master-sin, unto which your *Callings and Conditions make you most liable.* They that *trade* in the World, how apt are they through the Corruption of their own Hearts, to defraud and overreach; to get immoderate and dishonest gain: hence that strict Probibition, 1 *Thes.* 4. 6. *Let no man go beyond or defraud his Brother in any matter, knowing that the Lord is the Avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you, and testified.* How apt are they, to venture upon the Sin of Lying and Equivocation, for advantage, and they teach and command their Servants and Children to follow their pernicious Examples; as if Earthly gain were so considerable, that 'tis no great matter how many Souls are lost for the sake of it. They that are *Rich in this World*, are prone to be *high-minded, and to trust in uncertain Riches*, 1 Tim. 6. 17. to withhold *the Hire from the* poor Labourers; to live in *wantonness and pleasure*, Jam. 5. 1, 2, 3. to *be full and deny God, and say, Who is the Lord?* They that are poor in the World, are prone to *Steal*; (all unjust dealing, is Stealing, an unjust action makes a Man a Thief in Gods account) and *to take the Name of God in vain*, Prov. 30. 9.

3. That is a Master-sin, which the Sinner is most *unwilling should be brought to light, and cannot bear to be reproved for.* We read, *Joh.* 3. 20. *Every one that doth Evil, hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reproved*; but of all others, he cannot endure to be reproved for the Sin that easily besets him, and that he loves most. He *tramples the Pearl* of reproof *under his Feet*, and is ready

to turn again, and *rend* the reprover. *John* the Baptist was a *burning and a shining Light*. *Herod* the King heard him, some of his Exhortaions and Doctrines went down with *Herod*, and produced a partial Reformation. At length the Baptist comes home, and strikes at the Master Sin, tells *Herod* of his *Herodias*, and that it was *not lawful for him to have his Brother's Wife*. This was not to be born, the King counted the Prophet *too bold* to meddle with *his beloved Lust*. He hears him no longer, he suffers him to Preach to others no longer. He first puts him into Prison, and afterwards puts him to Death, and thus was this burning and shining Light extinguished, *Mar.* 6. 17, —27.

4. The Master Sin, *Conscience when awakened by distress, is very apt to accuse the Sinner of, and furiously to fly in his face for.* Conscience though it sleeps in a Calm, usually awakes in a Storm; when Death-threatning Affliction lies hard upon the Sinner, and he looks beyond Death unto Judgment, and into Eternity; then Conscience speaks plainly; rebukes boldly, and especially the Master-Sin makes it very clamorous. *Envy* was a Sin *Predominant* in *Josephs Brethren*, they could not bear the thoughts of his future advancement; they sold him for a Slave, to prevent his being exalted over them, as was presignified by his Dreams. Many years after, God calls for a Famine upon the Land; down go these Brethren into *Egypt* to buy Food, there *Joseph* seizes them, deals hardly with them, and they are in great Distress. Conscience now awakes, with great terrour flies in their Faces; and their envy and cruel dealing with *Joseph* their Brother, comes to remembrance with great anguish and trouble, *Gen.* 42. 21, 22. *They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our Brother; in*

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that we saw the anguish of his Soul, when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us, therefore behold also is his blood required. Conscience does Comment upon Affliction, and has its *terrible glosses.* These *blows* are given thee for thy *secret filthiness*, for thy *intemperance*, for thy *injustice*, for thy *earthlimindedness*, for thy *doing the Work of God Heartlesly and negligently!* Observe what Conscience *now* says, for the Master Sin it takes special notice of.

5. That is a Master Sin, which *when the Sinner is almost perswaded to be a Convert, hinders him from being a Convert altogether.* That *Jacob* might have Corn, he was contented that ten of his Sons should go and fetcht it; but how loath was he to let *Benjamin go!* When a Sinner is convinced of the necessity of Conversion, he may consent to part with *two* or *three* or *ten* Sins; but that which is most beloved, he huggs still, *that Sin* and *he* must never part. When the Soul is ready to be *espoused* to Christ. *This* Sin stands up and *forbids the Banes.* We read of a young man in the Gospel, soberly inclined; he saw the necessity of eternal Life and the value of it; he comes to Jesus, and says, *Good Master, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal Life?* Our Lord tells him of the *commands*, the young man is glad of this, for as to the letter of the second-Table-precepts; he had been a strict observer of them all from his Youth up. At length our Lord, who knew *Love to the World* was his Master Sin; bids him *to go and sell all that he had on Earth*, and *follow* him, and he should have a more enduring and better *Treasure in Heaven.* But his Love to the World hindred his Believing and Conversion, he goes away *very sorrowful, for he was very rich*, Mat. 19. 21, 22. His Riches were very unreasonably and excessively loved, he cleaves to Mammon, and leaves the only Saviour!

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6. That is a Master Sin, which *pretends most highly to consult the Sinners safety, gain, and pleasure.* To be safe, to be advantaged, and delighted, are things very taking to Humane Nature; pretences this way are prevalent, but all Sins pretences are vain. When our Lord commands that the *right eye* should be *pluckt out*, the *right hand cut off*; the meaning is not, that Christianity binds us cruelly to dismember our selves: Indeed the abuse of our members is severely forbidden, but our members themselves are not to be parted with, but employed after an holy manner. That therefore which our Lord intends is this, either, that we should be *as without an eye*, to behold vanity and tempting Objects; as *without an hand* to work that which is evil. Or, that though Sin be naturally as dear to us as our right eye; as seemingly necessary as our right hand; yet we must part with it, and not spare it to the hazard and ruine of our selves for ever, *Mat.* 5. 29, 30. I might also add, that Sinners are apt above all to *wish*, that the Master Sin were *no Sin* at all. And because the Law forbids it, they hate the Law; and the motions of their wicked Hearts towards it are more strong and violent. And here is a notable difference between an *unsanctified*, and a *sanctified* Heart. The unsanctified Heart wishes that the Law were *less Holy*, that *Sins* were *no Sins*; but the Heart that is sanctified, does not desire the Law were *less strict and pure*, but that *it self* were *more pure*, and more conformed unto a Law that is so good and excellent; it does not desire a Liberty to commit Sin, but that all the remaining lustings of the Flesh that way, were more throughly mortified.

In the third place, I am to produce the *Reasons* why this Master Sin ought *especially to be abandoned.*

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1. Because, this is *Gods Principal Enemy*. All Sin is against him, but *this* is a special Provocation in the the eyes of his Holiness and Glory. The Apostle tells us that *Love* is the *greatest Grace*; and Christ himself says, that Love is the *first and great Commandment*: The Master Sin, which is most beloved, which takes away the affection of the Heart, which God chiefly requires; must needs provoke Him unto great Jealousie. This is the *Presumptuous Sin*, 'tis greatly offensive; for deservedly 'tis called the *great Transgression*, Psal. 19. 13.

2. The Master Sin should be abandon'd, because in a special manner *it separates between God, and the Soul that is guilty of it*. Sin has many bad effects, but a worse can't be named than this, *Isa.* 59. 2. *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear*. Let the *Saints in Heaven* speak what 'tis to see the *Face of God!* Oh the *evil* that is in Sin, which causes the Face of God to be *hid* from the Sinner! Every Sin may be compared to a cloud; but the Sin which does most easily beset us, is the blackest, the darkest cloud of all, which does most totally deprive us of the Light of Gods Countenance.

3. If the Master-Sin be not abandon'd, *no other Sin whatsoever, can be truly repented of*. A man may indeed *abstain* from some Sins, but he does not abstain from them, *as Sins*, and because they are *displeasing* to God; because contrary to his will, and because they hinder Communion with God; if he did, then certainly he would keep himself from the *beloved Sin*, which is principally hateful to God, and the grand obstruction of fellowship with Him.

4. The Master Sin should be abandon'd, because this is *so great a grief unto the Holy Spirit of God*. How often

often does he tell the false Professour of his lying Tongue! and the unjust Professour of his unrighteous dealing! The good Spirit vouchsafes to strive with very wicked men, and moves them to hate the Sin which they unreasonably Love to their own ruine. But if Sin be loved still, the Spirit is grieved and vexed. And is it safe to grieve and vex the Sanctifier, the Comforter? No. Read what follows upon vexing the Spirit, *Isa.* 63. 10. *But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their Enemy, and he fought against them.*

5. The Master Sin should be abandon'd, because 'tis *this chiefly that keeps the Lord Jesus out of the Throne.* Why do so many say in their Hearts, *we will not have Christ to Reign over us*? The reason is, because they are resolved their *fleshly* and their *wordly Lusts* shall rule there still. And if Christ *rule* not, 'tis in *vain* to expect he will *save*, for he is the *Author of Eternal Salvation unto them that obey him*, Heb. 5. 9. Nay, as he will *not save* them that will not be subject to him, so he has threatned to *slay* them. As *for those mine Enemies, that would not I should reign over them, bring them forth, and slay them before me*, Luk. 19. 27.

I come in the last place to the *Application*, and the *Uses* are these three.

USE I. By way of *Examination*: Try your selves, whether you are willing to abandon the Sin that does so easily beset you: and for you your help in this matter, I would ask you,

1. Are you willing *to have this Sin, whatever it be, discover'd*? Are you willing that God should signifie to you, what 'tis in *you* that *most of all displeases* him? *Job* professes that he *cover'd not his Transgression, as Adam, by hiding his Iniquity in his Bosom*, Job.

31.

31. 33. He that *hates* Sin, *loves* it; he that pleads for Sin, is a Servant, a Slave to it. The *defence* of Sin, is worse than the *Offence* it self. Can you come to God, and say, *Lord! I open my Heart to Thee. Search, Ransack here; Let no sin lye concealed! Let not so much as one be spared, but especially discover the* Master-sin, *which is my greatest Enemy, as well as thine.*

2. Are you willing to *hear all the Evil the Word does speak against the Master-sin*? If so, this would argue that 'tis no longer loved. 'Tis a Sign of malice towards our Neighbour, if we are glad to hear all the Evil that is spoken of him, and all the Reproach that is cast upon him. 'Tis a Sign of hatred to Sin, when we like to have it discovered, when we like that its deceitful and damnable Nature should be represented, and the falsness, foulness, and filthiness of it should be laid open and naked. Sin is so great an Evil, that there cannot be too much Evil spoken of it; 'tis so great an Enemy, that you can never too faithfully and plainly be warned against it.

3. Do you apprehend your *greatest danger to be from your Master Sin*? and therefore continually endeavour the Mortification of it? The King of *Syria* give this Commission to his Army, *Fight neither against small nor great, save only with the King of Israel.* What? were all besides to be spared? No certainly, many *Israelites* fell in the battel: But there was a principal design to *take* at least, if not to *cut off* the King of *Israel. All Sin* deserves thy hatred, *no* Sin is so *small* an Enemy as that thou mayest *safely spare it.* But the Master Sin is the *chief sort*, therefore *its* destruction should chiefly be designed. That Man that is an Enemy to his Master Sin desires it may be still weakned by all means. Oh! saith he, that every *Mercy* may help to kill it! leading me to Repentance for it! That every stroke of the *Rod* may help to strike it more dead! that every *Sermon* may give this Sin a blow! that by every *Prayer* I may obtain more strength against it! That every time I come to the *Table of the Lord, this Sin* may be in a greater measure Crucified!

USE II. Of *Exhortation.* And of this there are two Branches.

I

I shall speak to *Sinners*, that are under the *full Power* of their Master Sin.

Then I shall speak to *Saints*, in whom there are too great remainders of it.

1. I am to speak *to Sinners* who are under the *full Power* of their Master Sin. It is storied concerning *Agrippina* the Mother of *Nero Cæsar*, that it was told her by an Oracle, that her Son should be Emperour of *Rome*, but afterwards should kill his own Mother. *Agrippina* replies, *Occidat, modo imperet*! Let him kill *me*, so *he* does but reign. O 'tis the Language of all presumptuous Sinners concerning their Master Lusts, *Let them but reign, no matter though they are our Damnation and Destruction!* But what do you see in Sin, or in its Wages, that any of you should be thus fond of its Service? What good reason can be given, why Sin should have *one slave* in this whole *Congregation?* or in the *whole World?* I earnestly exhort you to lay aside *every weight*, but especially the *Sin that does most easily beset you.* Arguments to perswade are these.

1. Consider, the *Master Sin is the strongest hold of Satan.* While Sin keeps up its Dominion, Satan holds fast his Possession. This Sin is your most deadly disease, and the strongest Cord, in which the Devil binds you and leads you Captive at his Pleasure.

2. The Master Sin is the *great hindrance of the efficacy of the means of Grace.* This makes the Preachers pains, lost labour; this makes Mercies and Afflictions to be lost upon you; this makes you to lose all the duties you perform.

3. This Master Sin is *not without its Train.* A great Person, especially a *Crown'd Head*, is not without a great many that attend him! A Master Sin has a *great Attendance*: Many lusts are subservient to this *Main* one, that the greater and more plentiful Provision may be made for the fulfilling it. How great is thy danger who hast so many Enemies lodging in thee, and lording it over thee!

4. Suppose, this Master Sin *were alone, this were enough to ruine thee.* If a Pistol is discharged at the Heart, and a small Bullet enter there; it kills as certainly as if there were a thousand Cannons discharged at a man at once. One Sin suffered to rule in thy Heart is sufficient were there no more, effectually and eternally to ruine thee.

5. The Master Sin *wars against thy Soul most dangerously, and wounds most deeply.* And after it has ruined thee, Oh with what anguish will it be reflected on in the lowest Hell! This will be there thy heaviest load! Thou wilt remember how deaf thou were to all Counsel to cast it away, and how great thy madness was, in taking *most pleasure in that*, which proves the cause of the *greatest*,

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even everlasting *Sorrow* and *Vexation*. Oh be so wise, as to change your old Master, Sin; and let Christ become your Lord.

2. I am to speak *to Saints*, in whom there are *too great remainders* of the *Sin* that was *once* their *Master*. I exhort you *more effectually and throughly to mortifie it*. Pray consider,

1. If this Sin does frequently prevail, it will *keep you very low in Grace*. Faith will be weak, Hope will be dampt, Love will be cool; and the whole inward Man will wofully languish.

2. As you will be weak in Grace, so will be *low in Comfort*. When Temptations are yielded to, Conscience will be disquieted; Peace will be disturbed; Thy Pride, thy Passion, thy carnal Affections prevailing, will make thy Heart *too much like the troubled Sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast forth mire and dirt*, Isa. 57. 20.

3. The [illegible]lency of this easily besetting Sin, will *hinder you from being so [illegible]ble to your great and gracious Lord*. It will make his work to be neglected; and when done, to be done too negligently: *sorry Servants* you will be, and *very sorry* your *services* will be. The *more sanctified* you are, the *fitter* you are for your *Masters use*, 2 *Tim.* 2, 21. but Sin makes you unmeet, and more unable and unwilling to serve him.

4. This Sin will make you to *shine less in your lives*; 'twil sully your Conversations, and hinder you from adorning the Gospel. Oh keep unspotted, and walk exactly as in the day; that you *may be blameless and harmless the Children of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Nation, and that you may shine as Lights in the World*, Phil. 2. 15.

5. This Sin may cause, *you to set in a Cloud*. It may fill you with *doubts* when you are *dying*, and that will be very dreadful. You may be terribly frighted with the fears of Hell, when you are set at Heavens gate. Be therefore upright, keep your selves from the iniquity that does most easily beset you; that you may be more useful in your lives, have the stronger and more lively hope in Death; and that your End when it comes may be more perfect Peace.

USE III. Of *Direction*: How the *Sin which does most easily beset you, may be laid aside*.

1. Pray for *a clean Heart*, Psal. 51. 10. *David* having been overcome by a strong Corruption, and done a Deed that was very foul, cryes for a purer Heart, a more right and constant Spirit; he knew that to *purge the Fountain*, was the way to have the *stream so clean*: Go unto God for a *new Heart*, which he has promised, and will give to *all* who *prize* and *desire* such an Heart. Strike at the *root* of Sin in the Heart, then the branches, and this *top branch*, the Master-sin will wither.

2. Seri-

2. Seriously lay to Heart, how *much the Sin that naturally is most beloved, does deserve your hatred*: Hated Sin is so *weak*, that it can ruine none; 'tis the love of Sin that gives it power, and as it were puts a Sword into its hand to slay you.

3. Resist the *very first stirrings of this Sin in you*: I believe if *David* assoon as ever he beheld from his Palace the beauteous *Bathsheba*, had presently turn'd away his eyes, and had fallen upon his knees, and gone to Prayer, he had overcome the Temptation. Sin is more weak at the beginning: Our Lords Counsel is, *Watch and Pray, that ye enter not into temptation*, Mat. 26. 41.

4. If you would abandon the Master-sin, *Pray much for the contrary Grace*: Is Pride thy Master-sin? Pray much for Humility; Is Passion thy Master-sin? Pray much for Patience, and for the Meekness and Gentleness of Christ: Is Love to the [illegible] thy Master-sin? Pray that thou may'st rise with Christ, [illegible]ve, and mind a better World, better Honours, better Pleas[illegible], a more lasting Wealth than this World can yield.

5. Let the *Word of God, which does forbid and threaten this Master-sin, be carefully hid in your Heart*: This Word may be in thy *Mouth*, thou mayest talk of it; it may be in thy *Mind*, thou may'st have a notional Knowledge of it: Nay, it may go further, and be in thy *Conscience*, and be thought of in the very act of Sin. But if it be in thy Heart, if thy *Will and Affections* are taken with it, then it will be an effectual Preservative against Iniquity, *Psal.* 119. 11. *Thy Word have I hid in my Heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

6. Improve *the Death of our Lord Jesus*: Bring the Sin which does so easily beset you to the *Cross* of Christ: No Sin *truly dyes* but upon *Christs Cross*, Gal 5. 24. *They that are Christs, have Crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*; these are never Mortified but by being *Crucified*. How can the *old Adam* dye, but upon the *Cross* of the *second Adam*? Rom. 6. 6. *Knowing this, that our old man is Crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

7. Call in the *Spirits aid*: He can make the Word *sharp as a two-edged Sword* to pierce the Heart, and to slay the strongest Sin there: He glorifies Christ, and can draw you to him, and enable you by Faith to derive Grace from him, sufficient to help you against the most powerful Corruptions: He can kill the Sin that is hardest to be slain; he can *mortifie all the deeds of the body*, Rom. 8. 13. the strongest *members on the Earth*, Col. 3. 5. and he can *seal you unto the day of Redemption.*

FINIS.